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WELCOME

AUGUST 2020

“There’s a joke doing the rounds on social media that historians of the future will have to be sorted into which part of 2020 they specialise in. Certainly, we seem to be living in extraordinary times, with a devastating pandemic now overlapping with the **Black Lives Matter** protests across the globe. In the latter instance, history is very much part of the story, with protestors highlighting centuries of racial inequity, and fervent debates taking place about the future of statues of those involved in slavery and other imperial misdeeds.

For us the global quickly became local, as the statue of **Edward Colston** that was toppled a few weeks ago stood right outside our office. While people in Bristol and beyond have expressed strong and conflicting views on its removal, it’s hard to dispute that more attention is being paid to Colston now than when his likeness looked out over the centre of the city.

This month we’re exploring these themes in *Behind the News*, Michael Wood’s column and *Talking Points*. Plus, in an article on page 56, Hannah-Rose Murray highlights a lesser-known chapter in this story, when **African-American abolitionists** travelled to Britain to campaign against slavery in the US.

Elsewhere, we’re examining a broad range of British and international history, including Robert Bartlett on **medieval dynasties**, Shushma Malik on whether **Nero** was really a monster, Peter Frankopan on **global historical trends**, and much more. I hope you enjoy the issue.

Rob Attar
Editor

THIS ISSUE’S CONTRIBUTORS

Shushma Malik
Nero’s literary afterlife is unlike that of any other emperor. From being vilified as an Antichrist by early Christians to being idolised as a supreme decadent in the 19th century, he has horrified, delighted and electrified audiences for centuries.
Shushma reappraises the infamous Roman emperor on page 34

Peter Frankopan
As an educator and an academic, I think a large part of my job is getting the next generation to be thinking and asking questions, rather than trying to come up with answers myself.
Peter offers his verdict on the state of global history studies on page 29

Hannah-Rose Murray
My research rediscovers and amplifies African-American testimony in the British Isles, from performances and speeches to written narratives of their experiences of slavery in the US.
Hannah-Rose describes the impact of US abolitionists on Victorian Britain on page 56

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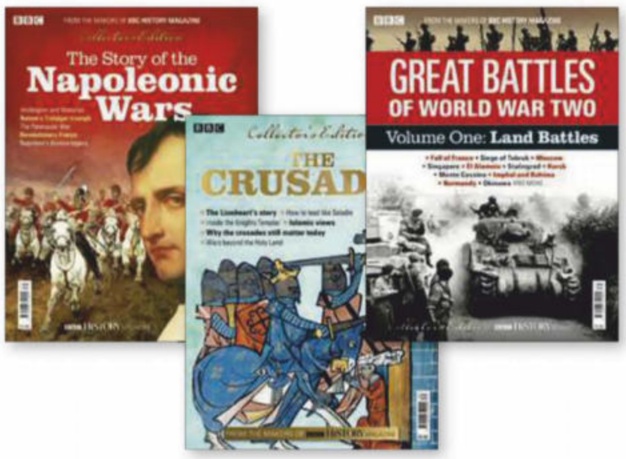

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POST **Subscriptions & back issues** *BBC History Magazine*, PO Box 3320, 3 Queensbridge, Northampton, NN4 7BF. Basic annual subscription rates: UK: £48, Eire/Europe: £67, ROW: £69

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COVER IMAGES: A VISION OF LOUIS VII, KING OF FRANCE (1137–80), HIS SON, THE FUTURE PHILIP II OF FRANCE, MAKES THE BARONS DRINK OUT OF A GOBLET FILLED WITH HUMAN BLOOD, AKG-IMAGES. NERO, AKG-IMAGES. THIS PAGE, STEVE SAYERS/GETTY IMAGES

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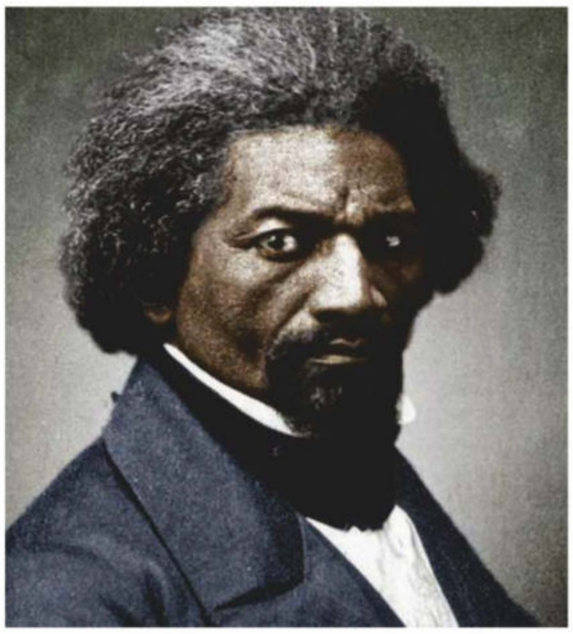

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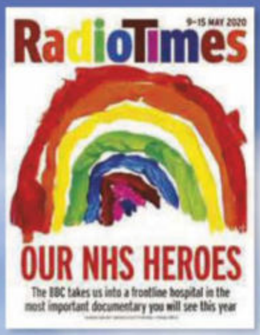
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NEWS
BEHIND THE NEWS
COMMENT
ANNIVERSARIES

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

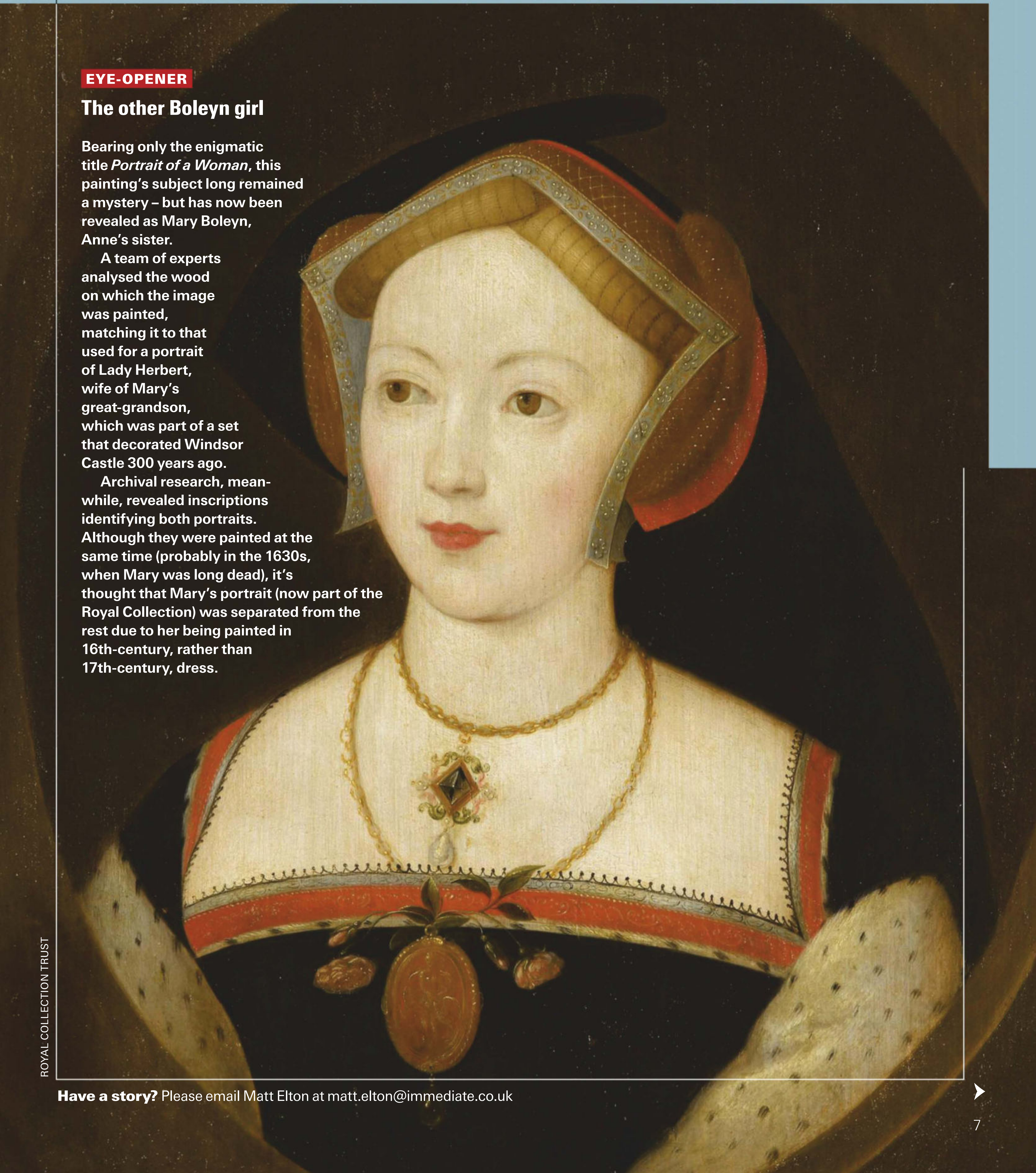
EYE-OPENER

The other Boleyn girl

Bearing only the enigmatic title *Portrait of a Woman*, this painting's subject long remained a mystery – but has now been revealed as Mary Boleyn, Anne's sister.

A team of experts analysed the wood on which the image was painted, matching it to that used for a portrait of Lady Herbert, wife of Mary's great-grandson, which was part of a set that decorated Windsor Castle 300 years ago.

Archival research, meanwhile, revealed inscriptions identifying both portraits. Although they were painted at the same time (probably in the 1630s, when Mary was long dead), it's thought that Mary's portrait (now part of the Royal Collection) was separated from the rest due to her being painted in 16th-century, rather than 17th-century, dress.



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TALKING POINTS

Polarising figures

The toppling of a statue of slaver Edward Colston in Bristol has sparked national debate – nowhere more so than on Twitter. **ANNA WHITELOCK** explores the discussions

Do statues lead to vital debate, or inflame dangerous passions? And who should they commemorate? Those are just some of the issues being debated on social media following the events of June's Black Lives Matter protest in Bristol.

Boris Johnson (@BorisJohnson), a great admirer of Winston Churchill – whose statue has been targeted by demonstrators – believes that "statues teach us about our past, with all its faults. To tear them down would be to lie about our history and impoverish the education of generations to come." **Robert Saunders** (@redhistorian) argued that "statues inhabit the present, not the past, and are subject to its jurisdiction. Our relationship with the past, and what we choose to honour, can change over time. It is not an offence against history to reflect those changes in what we commemorate in our public spaces." **Bernardine Evaristo** (@BernardineEvari) went further. "People of colour, women, working classes and LGBTQI+ [people] have all been erased or marginalised in the timelines of official British history. Relocating and recontextualising toxic statues in museums is a necessary remaking of history."

In a debate about a statue of Robert Clive, who brutally established British rule in India, **Likav Nerus** (@LikavN) wrote: "I despise Clive. But I feel his statue should remain to remind every Indian who walks past it about British atrocities in India and remind the Brits that their empire was built on invasion and repression of the colonies. Plaques informing people of real history would help."

University of Southampton lecturer **Dr Charlotte Lydia Riley** (@lottelydia) agreed, in part. "Some statues or memorials can be used to have difficult conversations about complex histories – but we simply don't put up statues to people that we don't want to *celebrate* as well as remember… I don't think people 'learn' much about history from seeing a statue." **John** (@hartigj1) injected a note of caution: "Shouldn't we first be clear about why the statue is there? Often [it's] quite specific irrespective of the person's character/rest of their record: Nelson (saved us from invasion, although an adulterer); Churchill (inspired resistance in WW2 despite an otherwise chequered record), etc."

Nick Harris (@2ndthoughttank) proposed radical action. "Has the 'removed statue' debate moved to melting them down to create new monuments yet?" It's a theme **DanielKorski** (@DanielKorski) warmed to. "There are many great subjects for new statues like author Mary Price, abolitionists Ottobah Cugoano and Olaudah Equiano… What about a #100newstatues campaign?"

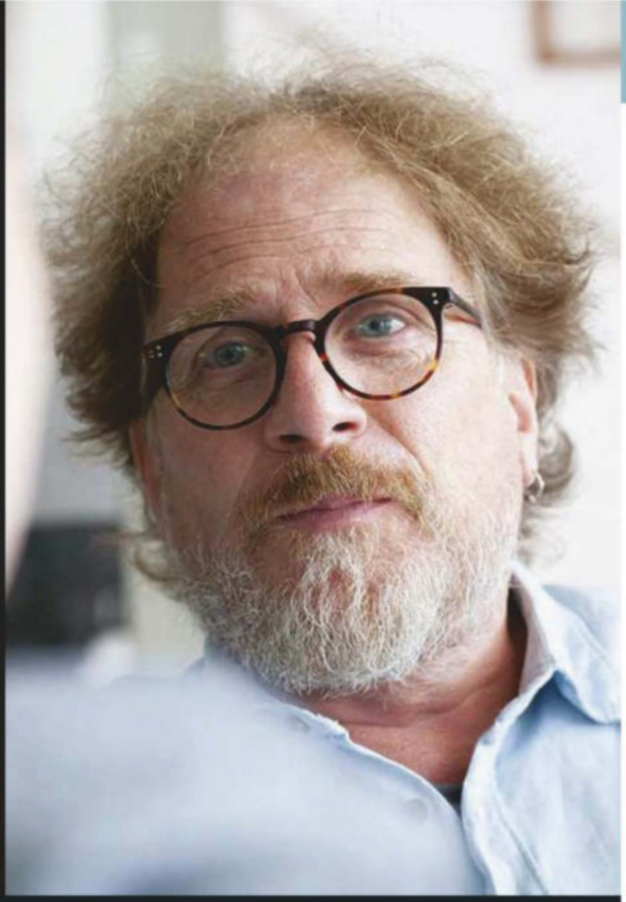
The debate looks set to run and run – but, as historian and *BBC History Magazine* columnist **David Olusoga** (@DavidOlusoga) points out, "the 'statue wars' must not distract us from a reckoning with racism". H

Join the debate at **twitter.com/historyextra**

> **I don't think that people learn much about history from seeing a statue**

BLACK LIVES MATTER
MALCOLM X

Bristol protesters with the fallen statue of Edward Colston. Twitter users have been debating the pros and cons of such removals



Justin Champion, who died in June, was "a leading scholar and an outstanding public historian"

OBITUARY

Justin Champion (1960–2020)

The British historian Justin Champion, who was emeritus professor at Royal Holloway, University of London (RHUL), has died after a long illness. He was 59.

Champion studied at Churchill College, University of Cambridge and joined RHUL's history department in 1992. He was an avid proponent of public history and, while department head from 2005 to 2010, established the UK's first MA in the subject. He was president of the Historical Association from 2014 to 2017, and a year later was awarded the Medlicott Medal for outstanding services to history.

"It was an honour and a pleasure getting to know Justin while he was president of the Historical Association," said its chief executive officer, Rebecca Sullivan. "He was key in our move to cover more diverse histories, particularly black British histories. He believed passionately in extending outreach, and in 2018 presented a masterful lecture about what public statues mean to various communities. His voice is much missed in the current debate, as it will be on so many other issues of history and its relevance."

David Musgrove, content director of *BBC History Magazine*, said: "Champion was a leading scholar and an outstanding public historian, regularly appearing on BBC radio and TV programmes to explain complex issues with lucid ease. He graced these pages, and our podcast, several times, and the history world is poorer without him." H

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HISTORY IN THE NEWS

A selection of the stories hitting the **history headlines**

Dame Vera Lynn, 'the forces' sweetheart', dies

The singer and entertainer Vera Lynn, whose performances became synonymous with the Second World War, has died at the age of 103.

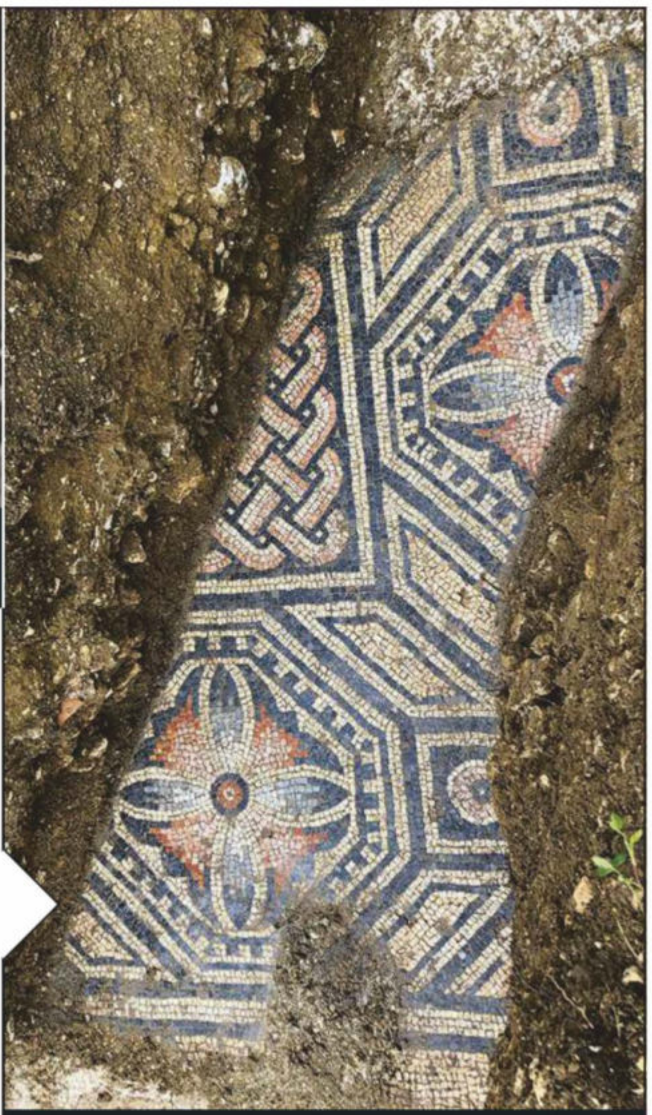
Born in East Ham in London in 1917, Lynn began performing at the age of seven, and left school at 11 to embark on a career as a singer and dancer. By 1939, still only 22, she had sold more than a million records – and, after war broke out that year, her shows for British troops in Egypt, Myanmar and India led to them voting her their favourite entertainer. The nickname 'the forces' sweetheart' stuck, and the song 'We'll Meet Again' became both her signature piece and one of the conflict's most popular anthems. Indeed, its place in British culture has been sufficiently enduring that it was referenced in an address by the Queen as coronavirus lockdown measures were put in place in April.

Lynn was awarded an OBE in 1969 and made a dame six years later. Her final public performance was at a VE Day celebration in 2005. In a statement released earlier this year to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day, Lynn remarked that "simple acts of bravery and sacrifice still define our nation".

Vera Lynn in 1940. The singer, who died in June, was the oldest artist to have an album in the UK top 40

Dig uncovers ancient mosaic

Surveyors working on a vineyard in northern Italy have unearthed a beautifully preserved and intricately patterned Roman mosaic floor thought to date from the third century AD. Experts have long believed that the hills of the commune of Negrar di Valpolicella, near Verona, were the site of an ancient Roman villa, traces of which were first found in 1922. The most recent excavations have also uncovered portions of the villa's foundations, and work is now under way to gradually reveal the rest of the site.

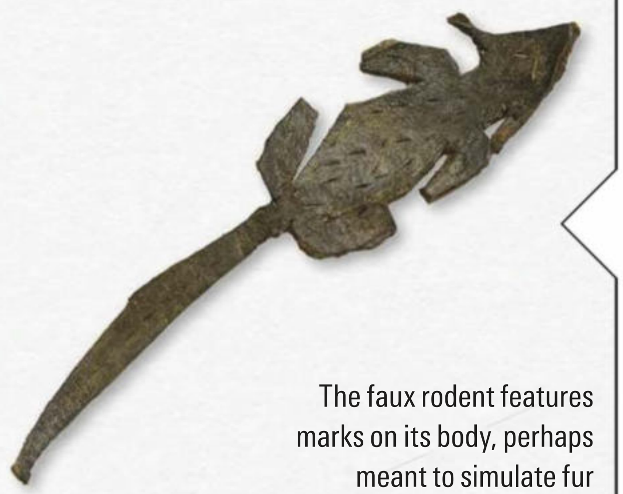


A segment of the mosaic floor, found beneath vines – and uncovered just a week into the current dig

Israelites used cannabis in rites

Experts have identified black deposits found on two limestone altars in a 2,700-year-old temple near Tel Aviv. The first, frankincense, is mentioned in holy texts, but the second proved to be something not associated with the Bible: cannabis. It's thought to be the first evidence of psychotropic drugs being used in early Jewish worship, and may have been set alight to induce a 'high' among worshippers. Chemical analysis identified several compounds found in cannabis, including its psychoactive element, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).

Cannabis may have been burned at the temple near Tel Aviv to induce a 'high' among worshippers



The faux rodent features marks on its body, perhaps meant to simulate fur

'Mouse' hints at Roman pranks

A strip of leather resembling a mouse, found at the Northumberland site of the ancient Roman fort of Vindolanda, may have been used to play practical jokes on unsuspecting victims. That's one of the suggestions made by researchers at the fort's museum, who believe that the 5in-long artefact would have passed as the real thing in dimly lit rooms. Another theory is that the object, which dates from AD 105–130, and had gone unnoticed since its discovery in 1993, was used as a children's toy.

Ocean history wins major prize

Historian David Abulafia has been awarded this year's prestigious Wolfson History Prize for his book *The Boundless Sea: A Human History of the Oceans*. Abulafia is emeritus professor of Mediterranean history at the University of Cambridge, and was among six shortlisted authors vying for the award in a ceremony in June. Judges praised the book, which explores the importance of oceans through millennia of human history, for being "brilliantly written" and "magnificently ambitious". H

David Abulafia, whose latest book charts the role of the sea in the human story, pictured in 2017

FRAN MONKS/AP-SHUTTERSTOCK/GETTY IMAGES/THE VINDOLANDA CHARITABLE TRUST/GETTY IMAGES

US racial tensions reignite

The death of an African-American man in US police custody in May has again thrust issues of race relations and police brutality into the spotlight. **KEVIN GAINES** charts the ways in which black people's long struggle for equality in America has been met with violence

Separate lives Segregated white and African-American people in Alabama in the 1930s. 'Jim Crow' laws of that period required the two groups be divided in all aspects of life

GETTY IMAGES

The protests that followed the death of George Floyd, a 46-year-old African-American man, in police custody in Minneapolis this summer are the latest episode in long-standing tensions between black people and US law enforcers. From the civil rights movement's earliest days, attempts by African-American people to exercise their rights have been met with tremendous hostility, both from sections of the white population and in the form of police brutality.

The US civil rights movement must be seen in the context of the Reconstruction era that followed the American Civil War. That was the process via which the federal government readmitted into the US the 11 Confederate states that had taken arms against the United States over the issue of slavery. After the Union victory in the Civil War, congress passed three crucial amendments to the US Constitution during Reconstruction: the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery; the 14th, which guaranteed national citizenship rights for African-American men and women; and the 15th, which extended suffrage to black men.

Historians view the Reconstruction period as a brief experiment in interracial democracy, in which black people shared political power alongside white people in former Confederate states in the American south. It was, however, only brief: an alliance of white landowners and politicians in those states overthrew Reconstruction state governments and re-established white dominance, with many white people using violence to terrorise the black population and prevent them from voting or defending their rights.

> **"** Police brutality was front and centre as the repressive force mobilised against civil rights activists and demonstrators in the American south **"**

What followed was almost a century of legal discrimination in the American south, lasting from the early 1880s until the passage of federal civil rights and voting rights legislation in 1964–65. The 'Jim Crow' laws and customs of this period required the absolute separation of black and white people in public life in the south, denied African-Americans the right to vote, and prevented them from holding public office. It also confined them to low-paid agricultural, domestic and other menial jobs, essentially preserving for white people the urban and skilled jobs of the so-called New South economy. What began as a patchwork system of state laws was eventually addressed at a federal level by an 1896 Supreme Court decision that gave constitutional sanction to segregation laws with its doctrine of 'separate but equal'.

Crucially, there was also a cultural dimension to Jim Crow discrimination. From an early age, white people in the south – in all segments of society – were taught an ideology of white supremacy and black inferiority by the press, politicians, parents and religious leaders. African-Americans lived with a constant threat of violence – between the 1880s and 1920s, thousands of recorded lynchings claimed the lives of black people.

The fightback begins

From the start, African-Americans resisted Jim Crow laws. They formed civil rights organisations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, based in the north but with branches in many southern towns and cities. They also fought back by leaving the American south: the so-called Great Migration saw millions of black people move to northern industrial cities throughout the 20th century. The north was by no means a promised land for these migrants. Race riots – invasions of black communities by violent white mobs – erupted in cities such as East St Louis in 1917 and Chicago in 1919. Police violence and corruption were facts of life for African-Americans in northern cities, but black people were still able to achieve

BLACK LIVES MATTER
Freddie Gray
SAN JOSE POLICE
J. SORENG

Fighting for justice Protesters in California face a line of police, May 2020. Recent months have seen Black Lives Matter demonstrations take place around the globe

a greater degree of political and social progress than in the Jim Crow south.

Police brutality was also front and centre as the repressive force mobilised against non-violent civil-rights activists and demonstrators in the south. Police abuse of power, often in collusion with white vigilantes, represented the most vicious aspect of the system of white supremacy. It was on full display in the use of attack dogs and high-pressure fire hoses to subdue peaceful protesters in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. TV news images of this violence created an outcry, which led to the massive voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965, led by Martin Luther King and other civil rights leaders.

Nor was the issue restricted to the south. The African-American Muslim activist Malcolm X drew attention to the way in which police brutality epitomised racism in the cities of the north. The Black Panther party, founded in Oakland in 1966, gained national attention and popularity among African-Americans for its forthrightness in challenging police brutality. It deployed groups of armed members to patrol African-American neighbourhoods looking for police engaged in potential mistreatment of black inhabitants – a direct challenge to the unaccountable power of police forces. Their tactics led to confrontations with the police; eventually, the FBI worked with local and state law enforcement to bring the full brunt of the state's monopoly on violence to bear against the Black Panthers.

Despite the odds, the American civil rights movement transformed US society. Its legislative achievements banned discrimination based on race in public life, toppled racial barriers that kept African-American people from working in a number of occupations and industries, particularly in the urban south, and made it possible for them to vote – creating, for the first time, a truly inclusive liberal democracy in the US. In tandem with increased access to business and professional training, African-Americans in the south experienced economic progress and social mobility, so much so that in the 2010 US census significant numbers joined a reverse migration to such thriving, southern cities as Atlanta, Miami, Dallas and Charlotte from the cities of the north and midwest where segregation, employment discrimination, higher living costs and their experiences of racially biased policing made life intolerable for many.

Mixed success

In the end, the civil rights movement's success was mixed. Its unfinished business was the demand for economic justice led by King and other civil-rights and black power activists. For African-Americans, the harmful effects of generations of exclusion and disadvantage were compounded by corporate disinvestment, destabilising many African-American communities in the urban north. It didn't help that the decades that followed witnessed periodic contractions of the US economy, and then processes of deindustrialisation and automation that saw a steep decline in low-skilled, well-paid factory jobs in former industrial powerhouses such as Detroit and Cleveland. African-Americans bore the brunt of the economic crisis of the 1970s, with its high unemployment and high inflation, combined with a conservative turn in politics that saw Ronald Reagan's

GETTY IMAGES

"Lightning makes no sound until it strikes"
-MLK
Amadou Diallo
Breonna Tayl
Corn

In memoriam
A mural of Martin Luther King in Boston. "Wilful blindness to black suffering is a key manifestation of anti-black racism," says Kevin Gaines

Republican government attempt to cut federal aid to cities to subsidise tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans.

In the US, the sad paradox was that African-Americans faced shrinking economic opportunities, even as they were gaining political freedoms. The fact that the movement was able to achieve equality before the law, but unable to secure economic justice for many African-Americans still has repercussions today. While a third of the black population now enjoys some degree of social mobility, another third remains mired in poverty. It is often those poor, under-resourced, segregated neighbourhoods that bear the brunt of the systemic police brutality and mass incarceration that has inspired the Black Lives Matter movement, and that epitomises racial injustice in the minds of many after the graphic killing of George Floyd.

The all-too-familiar scenario

"Violence is as American as cherry pie," Black Panther activist H Rap Brown declared during the racial and social unrest of the late 1960s. Brown meant that violence had birthed the US and been used to take land from Native Americans and enforce the enslavement of Africans and African-Americans. Over time, the role of law enforcement has been refined by a society founded on ideologies of white supremacy and structured in racial dominance. As African-Americans resisted slavery by escaping to free territory or organising armed insurrections, white men were empowered by the state as slave patrollers.

After the civil war, white policemen participated in massacres of black people in Memphis and New Orleans in 1866. White police either engaged in violence or stood down as white mobs vented their fury on African-Americans and their homes and property on several occasions, including in Philadelphia in 1918 and, perhaps most infamously, in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1921. Localised urban rebellions by disenfranchised black people during the mid-1960s were invariably started by incidents of excessive force by white police against black people (with the notable exception of the civil unrest that exploded in more than 160 cities and towns across the nation immediately after King's assassination in 1968). The all-too-familiar scenario of anti-black police violence and angry street uprisings played out again and again: in Miami in 1980, South Central LA in 1992, Ferguson in 2014 and Baltimore the following year.

> **"It's often poor, under-resourced neighbourhoods that bear the brunt of police brutality and mass incarceration"**

Underlying these explosions of unrest is pent-up fury over daily indignities of unredressed, systemic anti-black violence and harassment by urban police forces, and deaths in custody, that has stretched back generations. The recurrence of high-profile murders of black people by white police officers suggests a culture of police impunity but, before the advent of social media, rampant police violence remained mostly a local problem. Wilful blindness, among white people and others, to black suffering is a key manifestation of anti-black racism. At the dawn of the 21st century, opinion polls of public perceptions of the police revealed a substantial gap between white and black Americans.

Barack Obama was elected as the first African-American US president in 2008, but anti-black racism seemed to be on the rise. Obama's expression of identification with 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, killed by a vigilante in Florida in 2012, elicited howls of outrage from conservatives. African-American students, journalists and activists decried racism in its escalating forms of anti-government extremism and police and vigilante murders of unarmed black people. The alarming increase in the latter during Obama's second term led to the social media hashtag #Black Lives Matter, and the international mobilisations of the Movement for Black Lives. Police union leaders and conservative pundits fiercely attacked the movement and its protests against police killings after Eric Garner was choked to death by a police officer in 2014. George Floyd is only the latest, and surely not the last, of the litany of people killed by police violence and memorialised by the Movement for Black Lives.

Kevin Gaines is Julian Bond professor of civil rights and social justice at University of Virginia. He discusses the history of the civil rights movement on our podcast: *historyextra.com/podcast*

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HIDDEN HISTORIES

DAVID OLUSOGA explores lesser-known stories from our past

"The deadliest civil war ever fought is now almost completely forgotten"

In the 1860s, the world watched in horror as the United States slid into the most deadly conflict in that nation's history. One and a half centuries later, and the memory of the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln and the great armies that fought in blue and grey uniforms still burns bright in our collective memory. Yet in the same years another civil war was being fought, one that has been almost completely forgotten in the west.

That conflict lasted far longer and was fought on a considerably larger scale than the war in America. It raged for 14 years, from 1850 to 1864, and was the most deadly civil war ever fought, yet it has almost no name recognition. The Taiping civil war pitted China's ruling Manchu Qing dynasty against the forces of the Taiping or Heavenly Kingdom, a religious cult that inspired a vast peasant uprising. Although attempts to calculate the final death toll of the Taiping civil war are mired in complexity and are the subject of long debate, around 20 million people lost their lives – a death toll comparable with, and possibly greater than, that of the First World War.

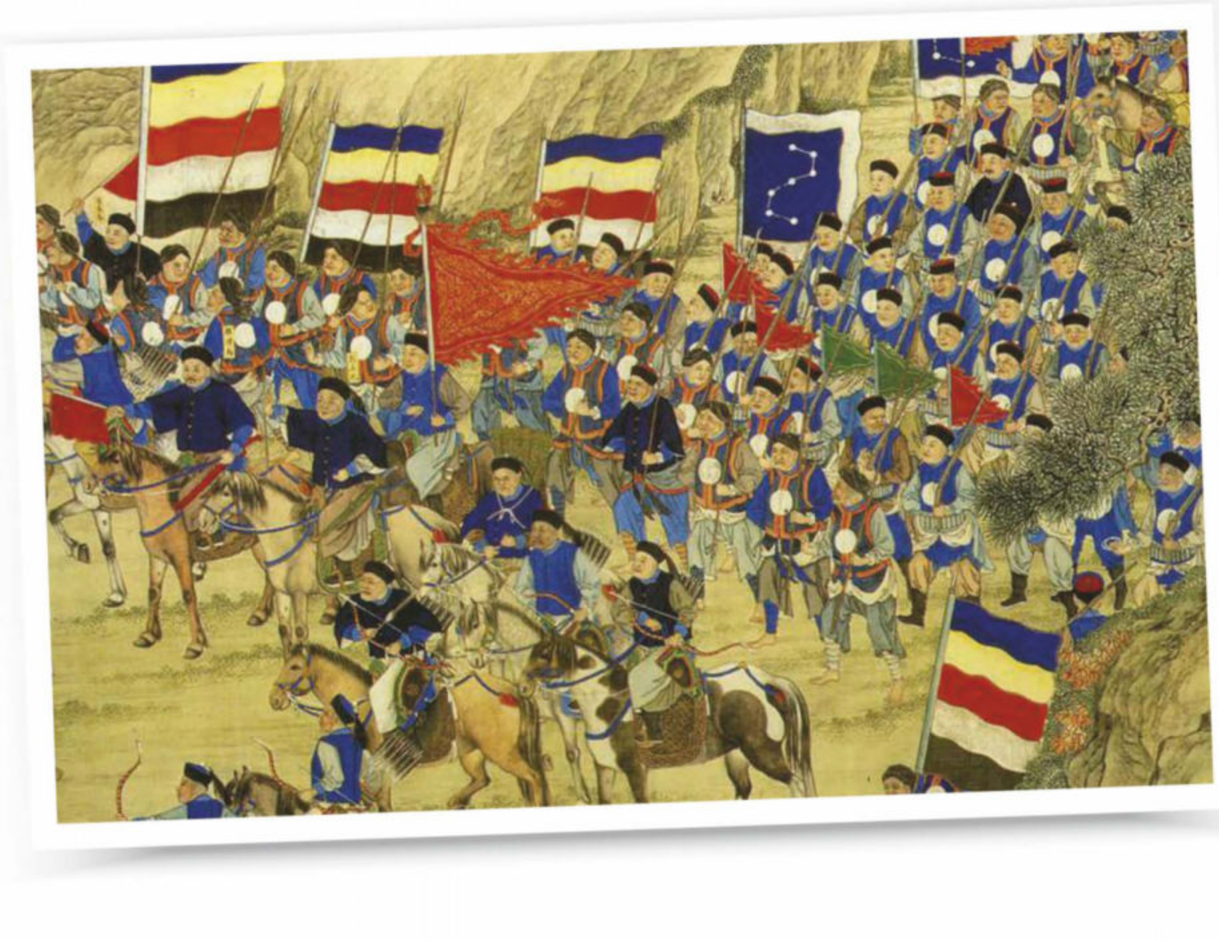
The bizarre sequence of events that led to this calamity began in 1837, in the southern province of Guangzhou. They centre around Hong Xiuquan, a school teacher from the Hakka minority community, who had repeatedly taken and repeatedly failed the infamously taxing Chinese civil service examinations. Emotionally overwrought and exhausted by his fourth unsuccessful attempt, Hong returned to his home village and took to his bed. There he experienced a series of vivid, trance-like dreams. Years later, in 1843, Hong read a missionary pamphlet produced by the London Missionary Society. On reading of Christianity he became convinced that his dreams had, in fact, been divine visions. In his idiosyncratic interpretation of the Christian message, he came to two astonishing conclusions. The first was that it was his divine mission to expel the Manchu Qing from China. The second was that he himself was the younger brother of Jesus Christ.

Within just a few years, Hong was able to convince others of his divine status and gather thousands of followers. From what is known of him there is no question that Hong was a highly effective preacher, a man of remarkable charisma and, it is said, stunning good looks. His early converts formed themselves into what became an increasingly militarised movement. In 1850 they had their first victory over Qing forces, and the following year Hong declared himself to be the King of the Heavenly Kingdom. Two years after that they captured the city of Nanjing. Like their contemporaries in the Confederate States of America, the Taiping now created, in effect, a rival state, ruled from behind the high walls of Nanjing. Yet their aim was not to secede from China but to conquer the whole nation and overthrow the hated Manchu Qing dynasty.

The Taiping civil war ultimately spread to 16 of China's 18 provinces. The success of the movement was, in part, a reflection of Hong's mesmeric appeal to his followers, and the fact that his generals included formidable military commanders. But the other reason that the initial Taiping rebellion became a civil war that threatened the rule of the Qing was that the 1850s was an age of chaos in China: an era of extreme rural poverty and crushing taxation. There was widespread banditry and lawlessness, and a series of rebellions in addition to that launched by the Taiping.

The Manchu were militarily weak and incapable of enforcing their rule. Worse still, their defeat at the hands of the British in the first Opium War in the 1840s, and the signing of the humiliating, hated Treaty of Nanking, meant that their weakness was apparent to all. Yet in the end, after the Taiping failed to capture Beijing, what helped save the Qing dynasty was military assistance and expertise from those same western nations who had so humiliated China. H

David Olusoga is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. He presents *A House Through Time,* the latest series of which is now available on BBC iPlayer



The lost conflict
A depiction of the Taiping civil war. Despite raging for more than a decade, and resulting in a death toll in the millions, the conflict remains largely unknown in the west

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ANNIVERSARIES

DOMINIC SANDBROOK highlights events that took place in August in history

1 AUGUST 1714

Queen Anne suffers a fatal stroke

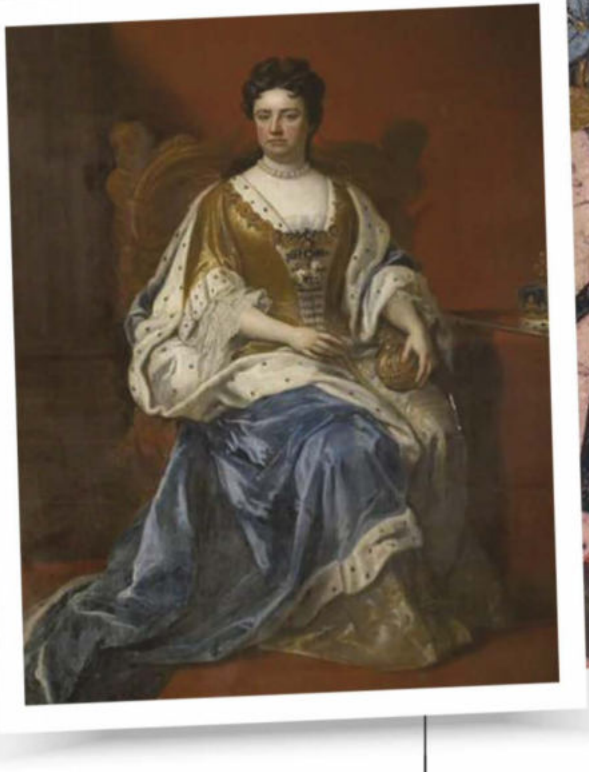
The monarch's death marks the end of the House of Stuart

By the summer of 1714, Queen Anne was in dreadful health. She was only 49 but seemed older, swollen by dropsy and half-crippled by gout. To cap it all, she took political stresses personally – and this was a summer of intense political turmoil.

In recent years Anne had relied heavily on Robert Harley, who is sometimes described as the first prime minister in all but name. But their relations had long since broken down, and in July she told the cabinet that he had come to work drunk and late, and treated her with "ill manner, indecency and disrespect". On 27 July she sacked him as Lord Treasurer, and attended a late-night meeting to discuss a successor. But the strain was too much for her, and three days later she suffered a massive stroke.

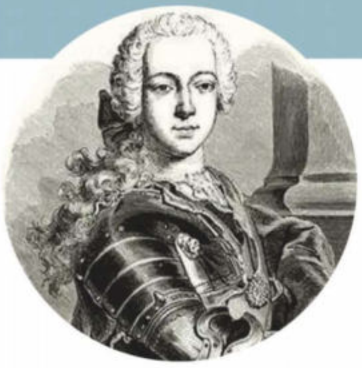
Anne had been struck down with illness many times before, but this was different. For the best part of two days she lingered, but at breakfast on 1 August the queen breathed her last. One of her doctors told his friend, the writer Jonathan Swift, that the end had come as a great release. "I believe sleep was never more welcome to a weary traveller," he wrote, "than death was to her."

In the next few days, while politicians scrambled to secure the smooth succession of George, Elector of Hanover, Anne's body was prepared for burial. In a rather undignified final touch, she was so bloated that she had to have a square coffin.



Queen Anne, in a portrait by Godfrey Kneller. The monarch was plagued by myriad health issues

BRIDGEMAN/AKG-IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES



19 AUGUST 1745

After landing in Scotland from France, Charles Edward Stuart raises his flag to **claim the British throne** and launch the final Jacobite rebellion – and gives Highland recruits brandy to celebrate.

29 AUGUST 1526

Hungary suffers devastating defeat to Ottoman forces

Louis II is routed by Suleiman I at the battle of Mohács

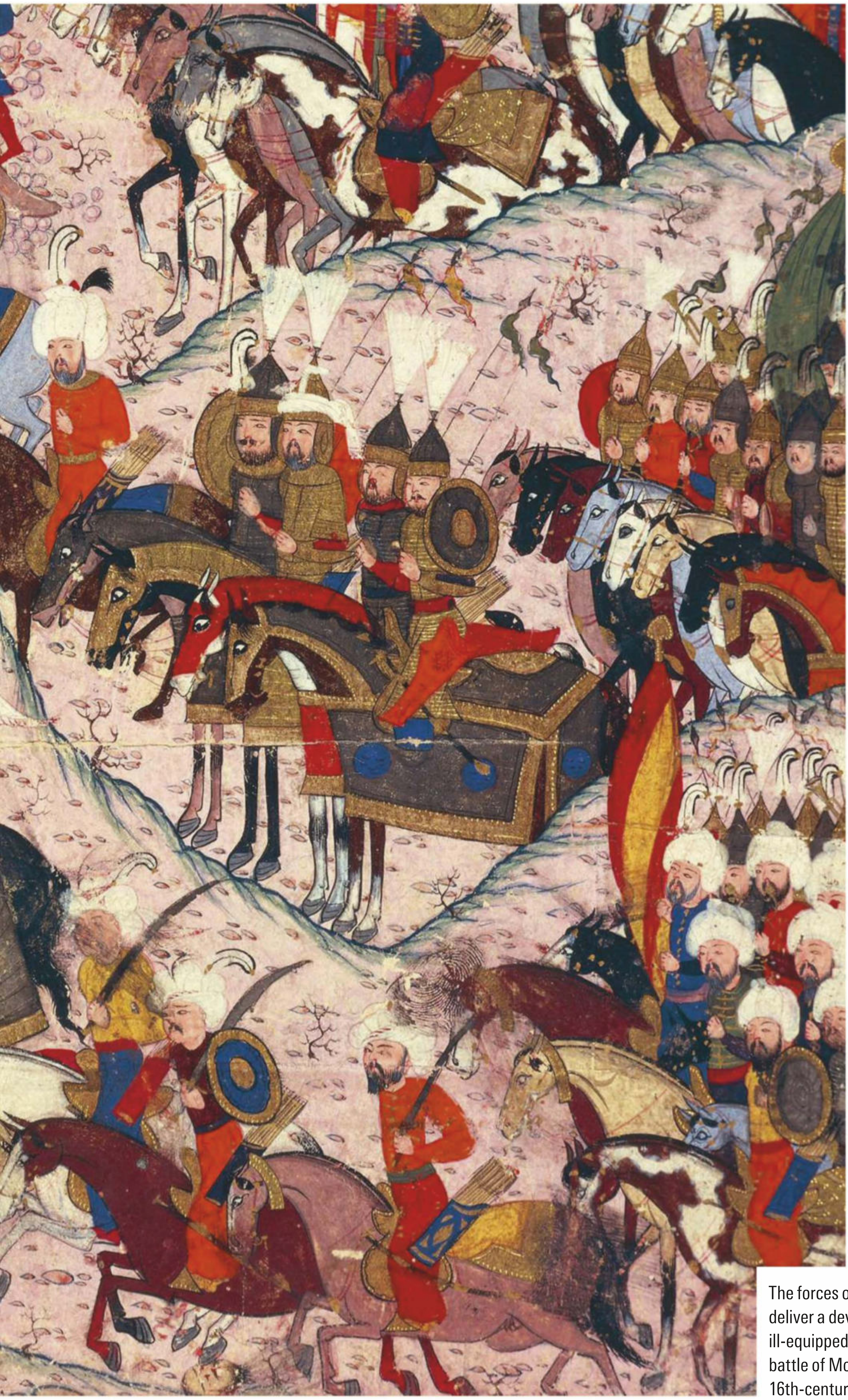
For the people of Hungary, few dates have more tragic resonance than 29 August 1526, the day their nation's army was defeated by the Ottomans.

For more than a century, the Ottomans had steadily been pushing north through the Balkans. But at the end of 1525 their sultan, Suleiman the Magnificent, had received an additional incentive from the French. They needed military support against the Holy Roman Empire, and Suleiman was only too pleased to oblige.

The Ottoman army left Constantinople in April, and advanced along the banks of the Danube towards the town of Mohács, in southern Hungary, completely unopposed. In response, the 20-year-old Hungarian king, Louis II, mobilised some 30,000 men, but after years of civil strife and economic decline, he simply did not have the resources to sustain a bigger army.

By the time the Ottomans came into view at Mohács, it was obvious that the battle would be suicide for the defenders. Not only did the Ottomans have the advantage of numbers, but they had artillery and musketeers, whereas the Hungarians depended upon their old-fashioned heavily armoured knights. And although the fighting lasted all afternoon, the outcome was never really in doubt.

At sunset, the Hungarians had been completely smashed. King Louis fled the battlefield alive, but he was thrown by his horse into a river and drowned, weighed down by his armour. With him died much of the Hungarian nobility. The road to their capital, Buda, lay open. It was the most shattering defeat in their country's history.



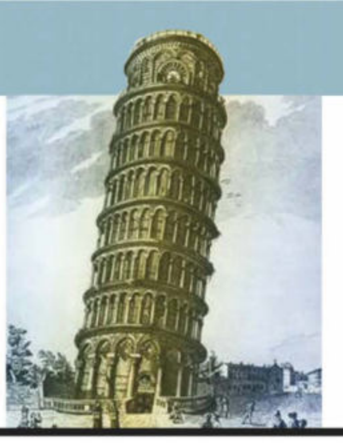
The forces of Suleiman the Magnificent deliver a devastating blow to an ill-equipped Hungarian army at the battle of Mohács, as depicted in a 16th-century Ottoman manuscript

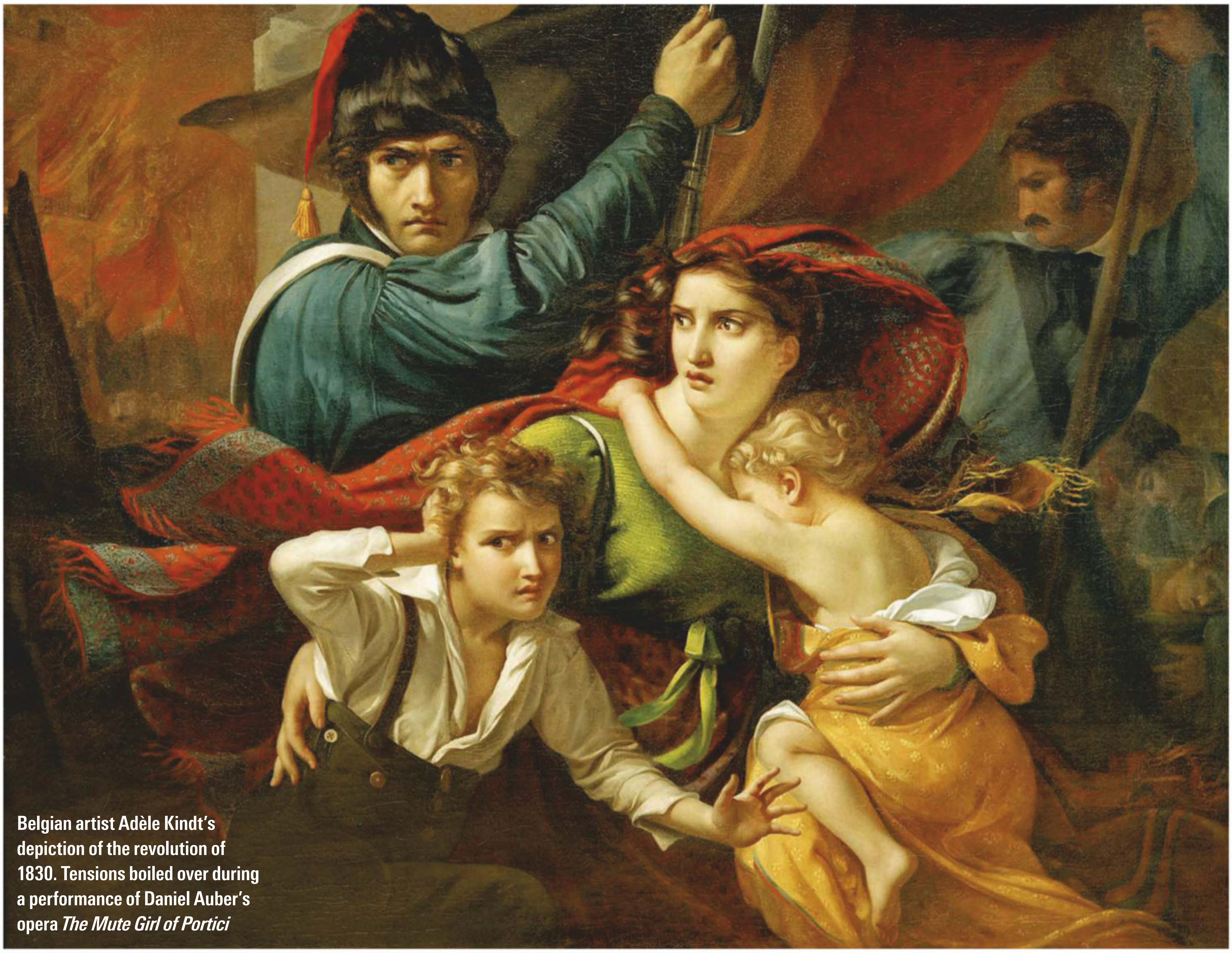
4 AUGUST 1944

German police find Jewish fugitives hiding in a secret annexe in Amsterdam, including **teenage diarist Anne Frank**, her parents and sister. Within a year, all but her father are dead.

9 AUGUST 1173

Builders in Pisa begin the foundations of a new cathedral bell tower – but after a few years it becomes clear that it is sinking, and they have to stop. All in all, work on the **Leaning Tower of Pisa** takes 199 years.





Belgian artist Adèle Kindt's depiction of the revolution of 1830. Tensions boiled over during a performance of Daniel Auber's opera *The Mute Girl of Portici*

25 AUGUST 1830

An opera inspires revolution – and a new nation

A festival performance in Brussels sparks civil unrest

Daniel Auber's opera *The Mute Girl of Portici* is rarely performed these days, but its place in history will never fade. Very few operas can be said to have inspired a revolution and created a country.

On the evening of 25 August 1830, the music-lovers of Brussels gathered at the Royal Theatre of La Monnaie for a performance of Auber's best-known work. It had been arranged to close a three-day festival celebrating 15 years under William I, King of the United Netherlands. Unfortunately, William was not a popular man.

Although the formerly Austrian Netherlands had been merged with the former Dutch Republic after Napoleon's defeat in 1815, it was not a happy marriage. The Dutch had a stranglehold on public life, while Catholics and French-speakers felt shut out. By summer 1830, tension was rising. In the run-up to the festival, activists put up posters in Brussels: "Monday, the 23rd, fireworks; Tuesday, the 24th, illuminations; Wednesday, the 25th, revolution."

Exactly what happened that night remains murky, but there is no doubt that many opera-goers were prepared for trouble. When the singers struck up the second-act duet 'The Sacred Love of Country', the cheering was so loud that they had to start again. And when one character sang the line 'To arms!', one paper reported that "the public could no longer be restrained. They acclaimed aria and actor, they booed the fifth act in order to stop the performance, and the delirious crowd [hurled itself] out of the hall – into history."

Chaos followed. As crowds surged through the streets, nationalists took possession of government buildings. They tore down the Dutch flag and replaced it with a tricolour in black, yellow and red. Although William sent his army to restore order, repression proved an utter failure. Just weeks later, the rebels' provisional government declared independence. They named their new country Belgium.

AKG-IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

Sharon Tate and four others were murdered in one of the most notorious crimes in US history

8 AUGUST 1969

The Manson Family appals America

Sharon Tate's murder sparks fears of a nation out of control

In 1942, a house was built for Hollywood star Michèle Morgan at 10500 Cielo Drive, Los Angeles. Over the years, famous faces came and went and, in February 1969, the film director Roman Polanski moved in, along with his pregnant wife, the actress Sharon Tate.

Tate spent most of 8 August at home, having lunch with friends. Her husband was away in Europe; she was almost nine months pregnant. Late that evening, she met more friends for dinner, before they all went back to what she called her dream house for drinks.

At about midnight, a car pulled up outside Tate's house, and a young man and two young women got out. They were members of the so-called 'Manson family', an apocalyptic cult recruited by ex-convict Charles Manson. The day before, Manson had told them that a bloody race war was imminent, and directed them to begin the slaughter at 10500 Cielo Drive.

What happened next remains one of the most gruesome stories in Hollywood history. Armed with knives and revolvers, the cult members killed Tate, her three friends and a teenage boy who was visiting his friend, the caretaker. Tate pleaded to be spared, because of her baby. But they killed her anyway, and wrote the word 'pig' on the door in her blood.

The cult struck again the following evening, killing two more people, but it was Tate's death that grabbed the world's attention. A year after the murders of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, and at a time when headlines were dominated by the Vietnam War, race riots and student protest, it seemed yet another sign that American life was spinning out of control. H

Dominic Sandbrook is a historian. His latest book is *Who Dares Wins: Britain, 1979–1982* (Allen Lane, 2019)

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WHY WE SHOULD REMEMBER…

The 19th Amendment, when American women won the vote

BY KIMBERLY A HAMLIN

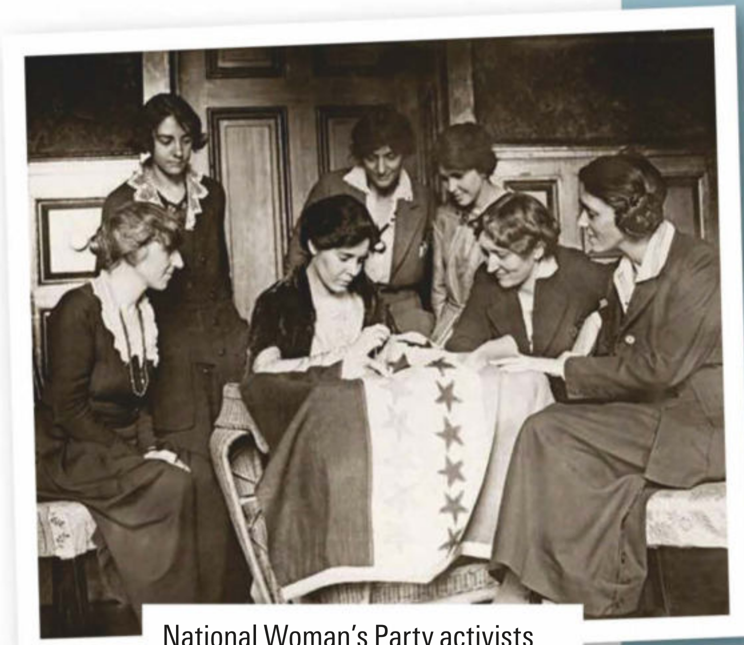
One hundred years ago, suffragists and their many opponents crowded into the Tennessee statehouse to witness what they hoped would be the final verdict on whether women would vote in the 1920 election and beyond. The 19th Amendment had already been ratified by 35 of the required 36 states. With other states refusing to call special ratification sessions, Tennessee remained the suffragists' last chance to vote in 1920.

The debate in Nashville raged for days, in the chamber, in committee rooms, and spilling out into restaurants and hotels. By midday on 18 August, the outcome was still too close to call. Then, young legislator Harry Burn switched his vote to 'yes'. Most of his constituents opposed women voting, but the constituent who mattered most to him was his mother. That morning she had sent a note urging him to "be a good boy and help Mrs Catt [the suffrage leader]".

Burn's surprise 'yes' vote marked the culmination of more than three generations of activism. American women had first demanded the vote in the 1840s, as part of the abolitionist movement's call for 'universal suffrage'. The movement splintered after the American Civil War, however, when the 14th and 15th Amendments granted citizenship rights, including the vote, to black men but not to women. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and others began agitating for an amendment enfranchising women. Between the 1870s and 1920, suffragists overcame prodigious opposition, countless setbacks, and internal divisions. By the 1910s, suffrage had become a well-funded, well-organised political movement representing hundreds of thousands of women.

> **"** Burn's vote marked the culmination of more than three generations of activism **"**

When the 19th Amendment finally came before Congress in 1918, women had made so many gains in other realms that objections based on 'female inferiority' no longer held sway. Instead, the main obstacle became white leaders' desire to keep black citizens from the polls. Elected officials from all regions and both parties feared that the 19th Amendment would compel the federal government to enforce voting rights in Southern states. So white suffragists signalled to Southern leaders that they could disenfranchise black women just as they had long disenfranchised black men, through poll taxes, literacy tests and outright intimidation. This meant that it was not until the 1965 Voting Rights Act that the 19th Amendment became a reality for all women.



National Woman's Party activists sew a star onto their 'ratification flag', to mark another state having ratified the 19th Amendment

We mark the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment during a contentious election year when voting rights are more precarious than at any time in recent US history. The suffrage centennial reminds us of the tremendous political power of women, the lengths to which white leaders have gone to keep African-American citizens from the polls, and the vital necessity of every vote in a democracy. H

Kimberly A Hamlin is a historian and writer. Her latest book is *Free Thinker: Sex, Suffrage, and the Extraordinary Life of Helen Hamilton Gardener* (WW Norton, 2020)

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MICHAEL WOOD ON…

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

"The US is blind to injustices that history has bequeathed black people"

Michael Wood is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. He has presented numerous BBC series, and his books include *The Story of England* (Viking, 2010)

BBC

Watching the Black Lives Matter movement unfolding in the States takes me back to the turbulent days of 1968, the assassination of Martin Luther King and the demonstrations that led up to Richard Nixon's election as US president. I was a student then, and that December in Virginia I was introduced to a woman who as a young person had met someone born enslaved in the antebellum south. It's not so long ago, is it?

History is always there, even when unseen, under the surface, running along like water under ice. And sometimes, like now, it just bursts out. My generation thought that the civil rights movement would signal the inevitable progress to more just and equal societies. But this year's events in the US (and in Britain too) suggest progress has been slower than we hoped. And that, ultimately, is because of the legacy of slavery.

In history, it's always worth going back over the story. After the discovery of the Americas, for the first time in history, people from one continent took over another, killing or enslaving its inhabitants and taking their land and natural resources. Most of the indigenous peoples were wiped out by disease. The father of environmental history, Alfred Crosby, estimated that as many as 90 million people died. (Incidentally, Crosby's great books, *The Columbian Exchange* and *Ecological Imperialism*, are of even more relevance now, in the year of coronavirus.)

The slave trade from Africa had begun even before that demographic collapse, to replace the decimated workforce. Of 12 million Africans forcibly transported to the Americas between 1502 and 1866, the bulk were taken to Spanish and Portuguese territories, and about 400,000 to the United States. Today, 13 per cent of Americans are the descendants of those Africans. That's the root of what's been termed 'America's original sin'.

In the 1860s, the American Civil War was fought over slavery. But the Reconstruction still imposed de facto servitude on black people, setting up an apartheid state in the south that gave rights only to whites. Then came the Jim Crow laws, in force till 1965, along with lynchings and segregation. Franklin D Roosevelt's New Deal politics were only pushed through by accepting the status quo in the south.

Prejudice continued after the Second World War in law, policing, housing and the use of incarceration as a means of social control. The civil rights movement brought greater representation, but there was still discrimination in work, jobs, health, justice. America's first black president was unable to push through real change, and now Trump's presidency has set the clock back on race relations in America. One-hundred-and-fifty years on from the Civil War, the legacy of slavery is still at work in American society.

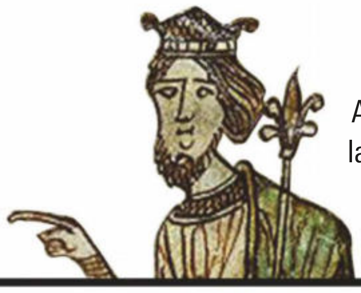
I've rehearsed this potted version of the US story because stories are how history works. But there are, of course, countless ways of telling the same story. You can find them all out there in today's frenzied, social media-driven world, including untruths masquerading as 'alternative facts'. That's equally true for British history: after all, it was the British who founded America, the British who colonised the Caribbean, and the British who operated a slave trade financed by people such as Edward Colston, whose statue in Bristol fell in June – decades after it should have gone.

Before he was murdered in 1968, Martin Luther King spoke of four great looming catastrophes: militarism, poverty, racism and materialism, the latter of which he saw as a narcissistic addiction to money, fame, spectacle and conspicuous wealth and consumption. (You could hardly find a better symbol for that than Donald Trump). How prescient he was. Vietnam may be over but, 50 years on, America is still in that place, steeped in a wilful cultural amnesia, a blindness to the everyday injustices bequeathed to African-Americans by their history.

And in a Britain likewise afflicted by historical myopia and exceptionalism, the fate of Colston's statue has suddenly become a symbol of these huge historical events. But it is only a statue. Bigger things are at stake here, that affect the futures of us all. For history is here, even when we don't yet see it, a powerful current running under the ice, waiting to burst out. H

ILLUSTRATION BY **FEMKE DE JONG**

LETTERS



An illustration of 10th-century king and lawmaker Hywel Dda. Laws issued during his reign specifically mention leprosy, notes reader Huw Evans

LETTER OF THE MONTH

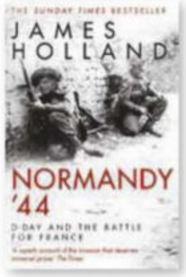
The last battle?

Eric Lee's article *The Fight to the End... and Beyond* (June) was highly informative, casting light on what was in Britain, until now, a largely unknown Second World War event – the battle of Texel. This battle, which ended on 20 May 1945, was the Nazis' last battle. But was it the last battle of the Second World War in Europe?

I am aware that, at Odzak in Bosnia-Herzegovina, a fierce battle took place, which started on 19 April 1945 and finally ended on 25 May 1945, 17 days after VE Day. It was fought between members of the Croatian Ustashe (which had collaborated with the Nazis during the war) and Tito's Yugoslav Partisans, the latter of which eventually won.

Meanwhile, the last German surrender in Europe occurred on the remote Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard in the Arctic region four months after VE Day. On 4 September 1945, German soldiers, who had set up a meteorological station on Svalbard, surrendered to Norwegian seal hunters, having lived and worked in their isolated post for a year.

Anindya Kundu, Hornchurch



We reward the *Letter of the Month* writer with a copy of a new history book. This issue, that is **Normandy '44: D-Day and the Battle for France** by James Holland. It was selected as one of our summer reading picks. See page 75

THE FIGHT TO THE END... AND BEYOND

A not-so-forgotten war

Grace Huxford's *How We Forgot the Korean War* (July) revived memories of my father's concern that, as a 'Z Reservist', he might be recalled to fight in Korea. I was 10 years old at the time, and the Korean War certainly made a lasting impression on me.

The war is perhaps less forgotten than the article suggests. There is a large memorial garden dedicated to it at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. It was one of the original memorial gardens when the arboretum opened to the public in 2001 and, as well as being viewed by thousands of visitors each year, has been the centre for the annual commemoration by the Korean War Veterans' Association.

Alan Cooper, Derby

Complexities of conflict

I read with interest *The Fight to the End... and Beyond* (June), in which Eric Lee asks: "Why would Wehrmacht troops inflict brutalities on so-called comrades?" Proudly hanging on my wall is a war medal given to my grandfather by the British government, so you can imagine my shock when I discovered a family picture with the same grandpa wearing a German uniform.

After long investigation, I discovered that many Wehrmacht soldiers were recruited from former areas of the German empire, which covered swathes of Poland. My grandfather was arrested by Canadians and, being a Pole, was handed over to the Brits who gave him a Polish uniform. This explains his story, but also why there was so much conflict inside German forces by the end of the war. Above all, it also shows how complex wars truly are.

Kate Hollis, Bromley

The mysterious Ninth

In his piece on the Roman Ninth Legion (*History's Greatest Mysteries*, June), Miles Russell makes the sweeping statement: "Until more conclusive evidence is found to illuminate the final days of the Ninth, we can only speculate as to what happened to them. However, it seems likely that somewhere in northern Britain, there's a corner of a forgotten field that is forever Rome." Sorry, but where specifically? I would point out that, in the summer of AD 122, men from 13 cavalry alae and 37 auxiliary cohorts in Britain were given honorary discharges, having served 25 years. Surely local tribes would have seen this as a golden opportunity to 'get their own back'. I'm afraid Russell doesn't convince me that the Ninth met their end in Caledonia. To point out the obvious comparison with the events of AD 9, had the Scots destroyed a legion would they have not celebrated the fact?

Having been born in Northumberland and spent a considerable amount of time in Scotland, I know of no site where there is any evidence such an event happened.

Richard Gunn, Gateshead

Miles Russell replies: The statement "somewhere in northern Britain" was deliberately vague (and sweeping) as that's precisely the nature of the mystery. We simply don't know where in Britannia the Ninth Legion was destroyed – but somewhere in Britain it certainly was.

Roman historian Fronto noted, in the early years of Hadrian's reign, that large numbers of Roman soldiers were killed by the British, and the later *Augustan History* said Hadrian visited the province with huge reinforcements because the Britons could not be kept under control. We know it wasn't just the frontier (everywhere north of York) that was in disarray at this time, however: the provincial capital, London, was burnt to the ground in the uprising, so the Ninth could have been destroyed anywhere. Only the novelist Rosemary Sutcliff placed the destruction north of York, which is why I deliberately avoided specifying 'Caledonia'. Roman troops were being discharged after 25 years' service all the time, and AD 122 wasn't unusual in that respect – nor was the garrison particularly depleted.

The Scots wouldn't have participated in native celebration, as they were still in Ireland at the time. Because British tribes and rebels never wrote anything down, only the Roman perspective survives – and we have to believe them, given that they say there were massive troop losses in Britain early in Hadrian's reign. The trick is to try to find out where the losses occurred. One day, traces of the legion will be found – they're out there somewhere.

Leprosy stories

I always enjoy David Olusoga's articles, and was particularly interested in his column on leprosy (*Hidden Histories*, June), but as I've often found the magazine rather Anglocentric, forgive me for adding a Welsh dimension. The Welsh term for leprosy is *y gwahan glwyf*,

ALAMY

Channing Tatum stars as a Roman centurion in the 2011 film *The Eagle*. Miles Russell's feature on the disappearance of the Ninth Legion didn't convince reader Richard Gunn

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

which means 'the separation disease'. It was certainly in use in the late medieval period, when bishop William Morgan included it in his masterful 1588 translation of the Bible. As early as the time of 10th-century lawmaker Hywel Dda, lepers were forbidden to inherit their fathers' property.

There are many examples in north Wales of *ffenestr y gwahan glwyf* built into the walls of old churches, to enable lepers to partake of mass while separated from the main congregation.

Huw Evans, Y Rhyl

Crossword confusion

The answer to 8 across in June's crossword is wrong: the western allies' mission to break the Soviet blockade of West Berlin in 1948–49 was known as the Berlin Airlift, not the Berlin Airdrop. The distinction is important: in an airdrop, the cargo is pushed out of the rear of the plane and arrives by parachute; in an airlift, the aircraft land at their destination and discharge their cargo on the ground.

Joseph Nicholas, Tottenham

Editor replies: Thanks to Joseph and the many other readers who wrote in about this. Apologies for the error. The 'correct' answer here was 'airdrop', and I hope you still managed to complete the crossword – if, perhaps, through gritted teeth.

WRITE TO US

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Vol 21 No 8 August 2020
BBC History Magazine is published by Immediate Media Company Bristol Limited under licence from BBC Studios who help fund new BBC programmes.

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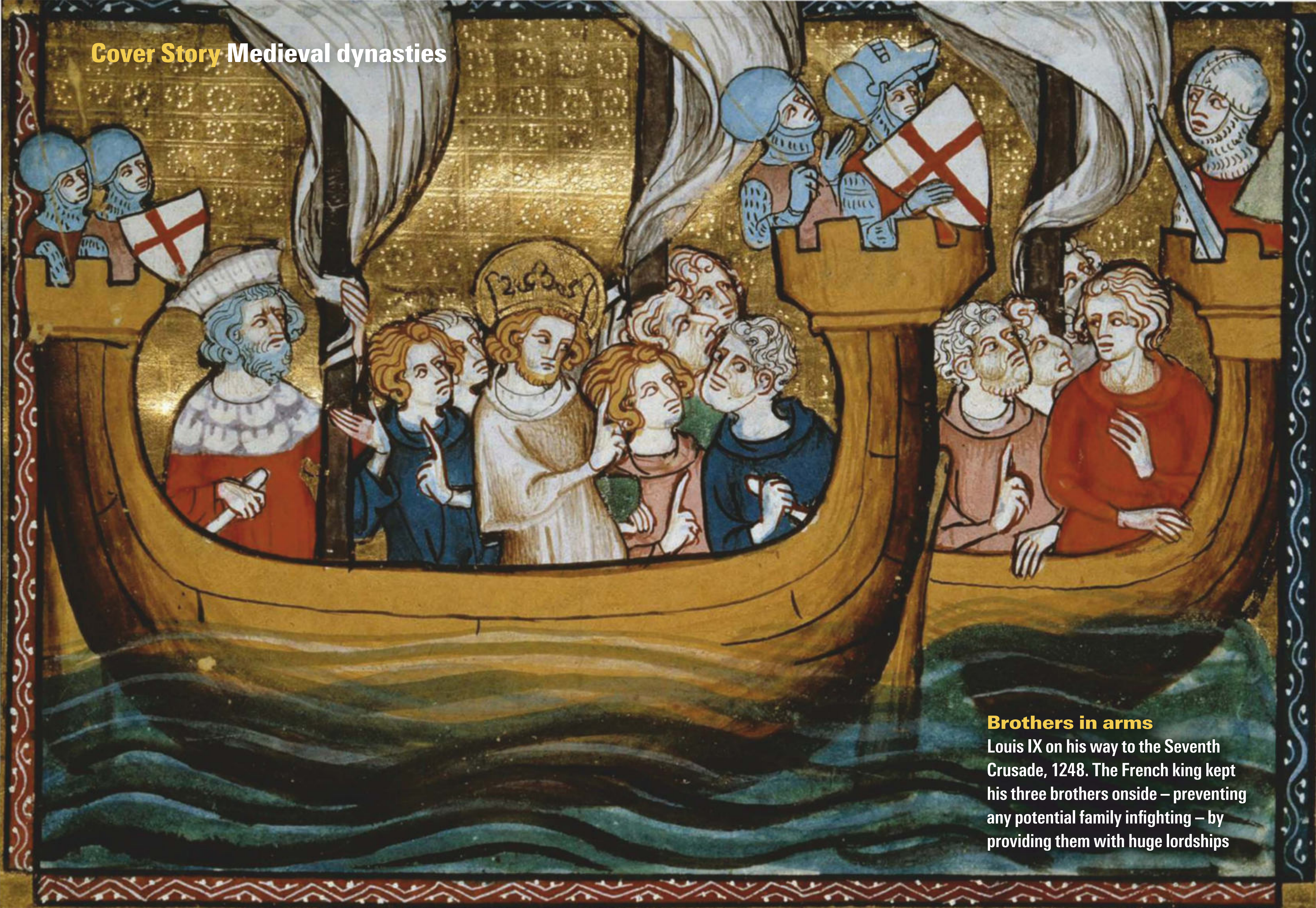
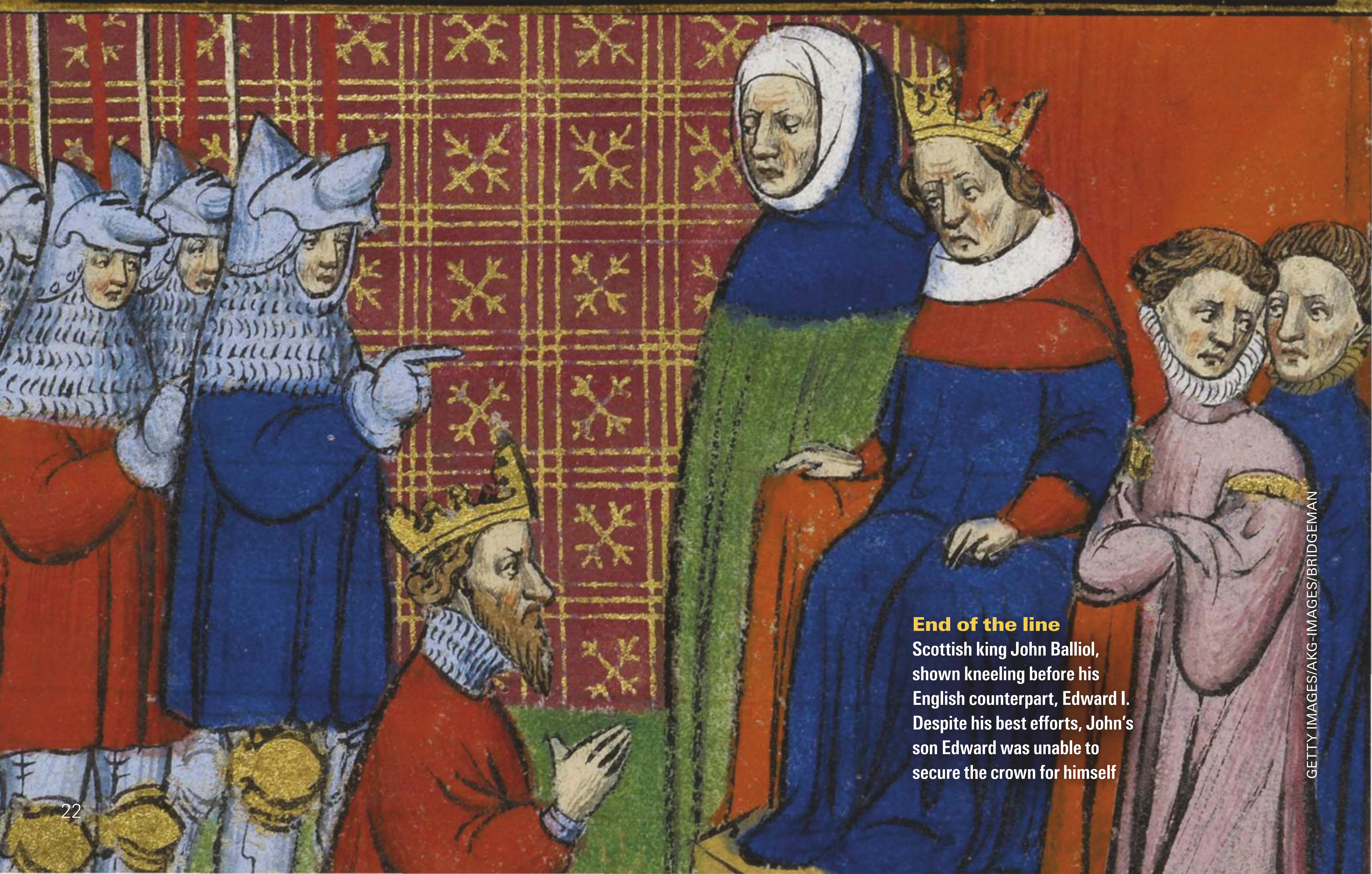


Brothers in arms
Louis IX on his way to the Seventh Crusade, 1248. The French king kept his three brothers onside – preventing any potential family infighting – by providing them with huge lordships



End of the line
Scottish king John Balliol, shown kneeling before his English counterpart, Edward I. Despite his best efforts, John's son Edward was unable to secure the crown for himself

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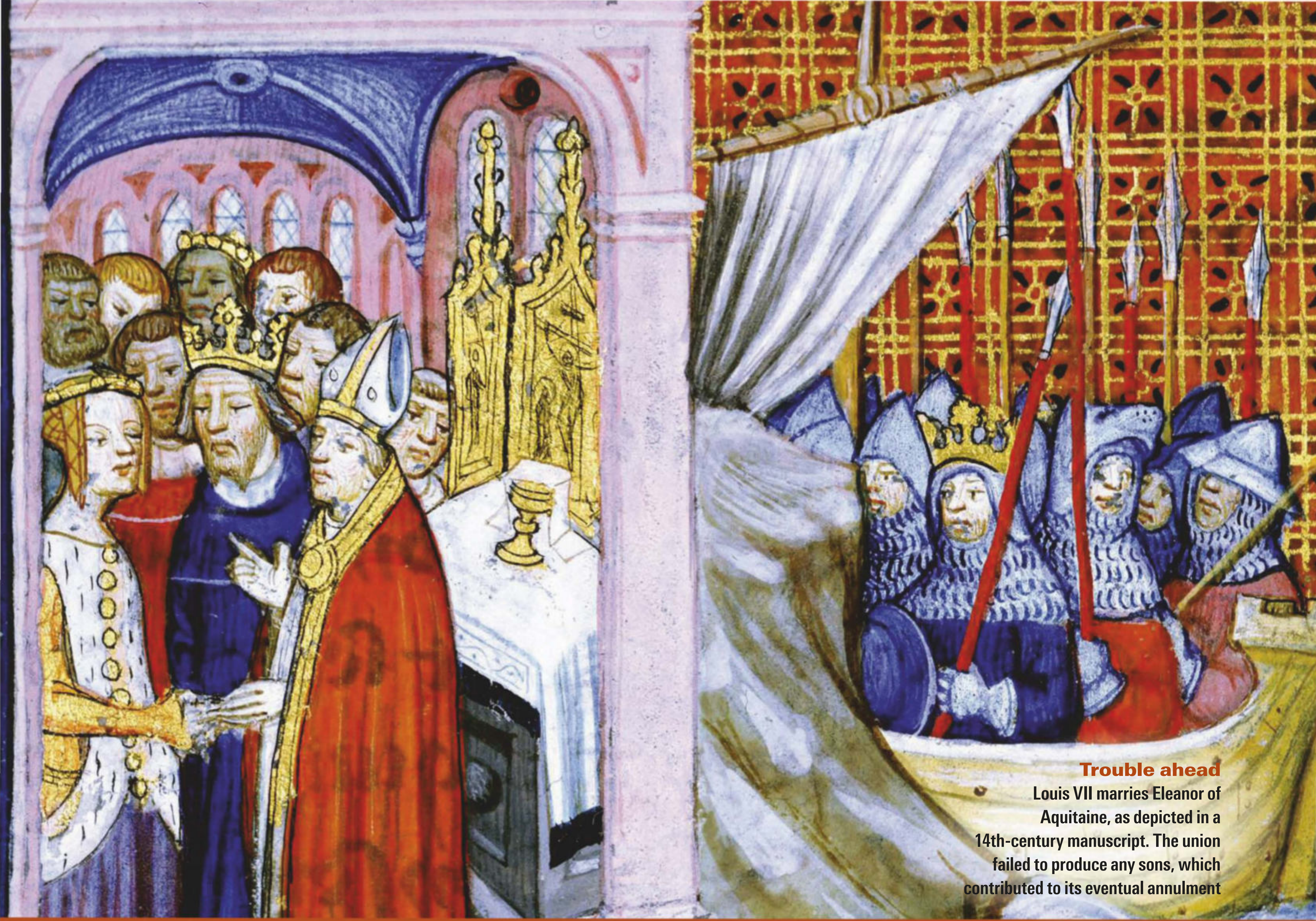
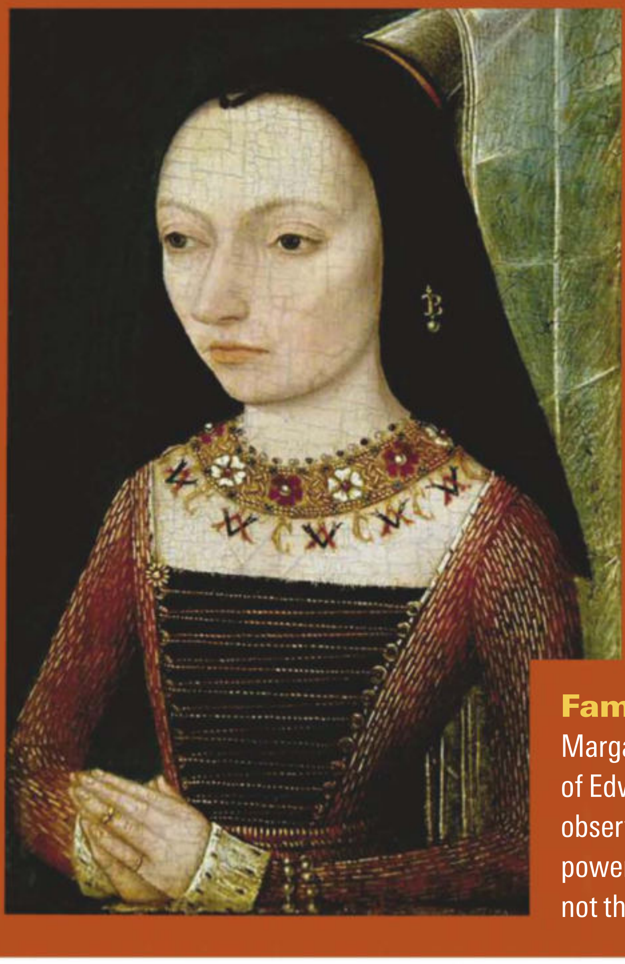


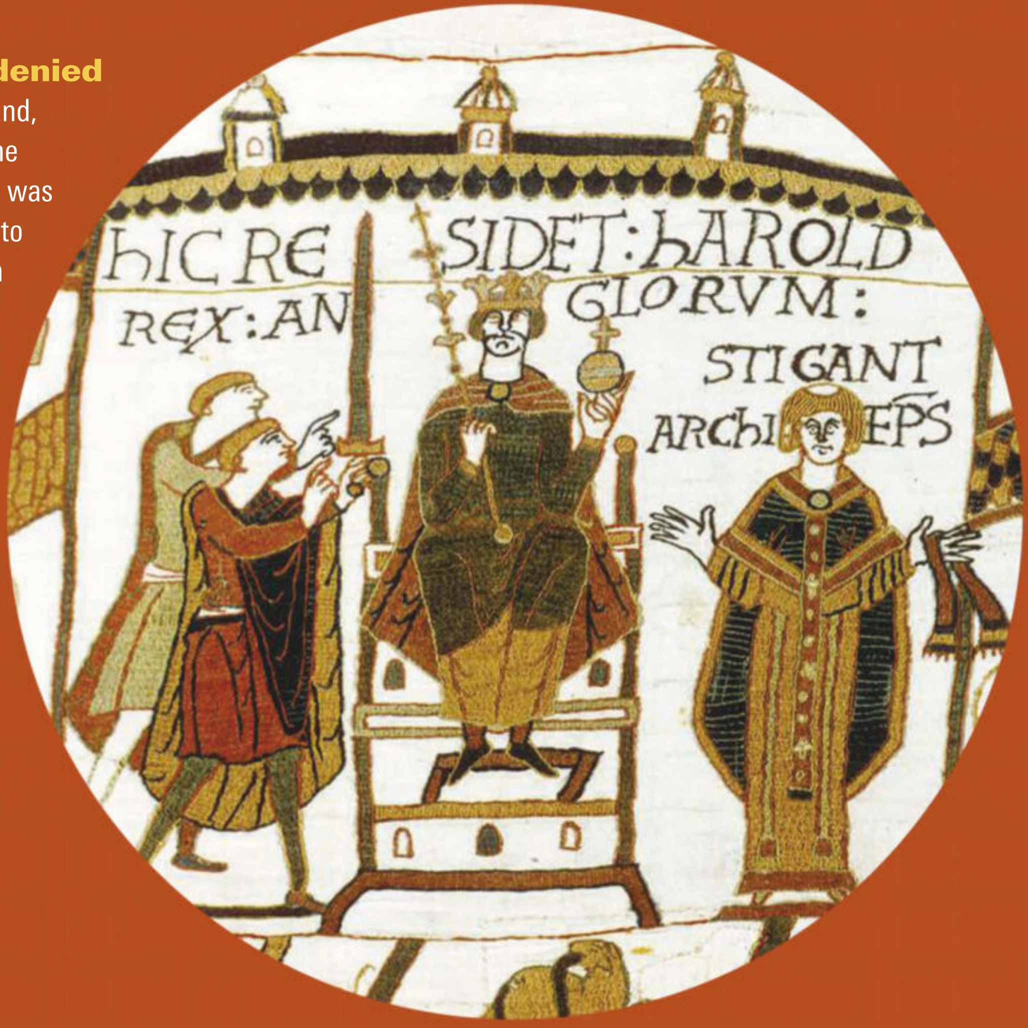
Trouble ahead
Louis VII marries Eleanor of Aquitaine, as depicted in a 14th-century manuscript. The union failed to produce any sons, which contributed to its eventual annulment

The bonds of blood

No medieval king could sleep easy at night until he had secured the smooth transition of his crown to a son. From marrying babes-in-arms to siring dozens of offspring, **Robert Bartlett** reveals the lengths to which rulers would go to ensure the survival of their dynasty



Family first
Margaret of Burgundy, sister of Edward IV and Richard III, observed that the passage of power was shaped by blood ties, not the will of the people



Dynasties denied
Harold II of England, shown here on the Bayeux Tapestry, was famously unable to pass his kingdom on to his sons

“In this kingdom, as is well known, a king is constituted not by the wishes of the people or by election or by the right of war but by the propagation of blood.” So wrote Margaret of Burgundy, the sister of Edward IV and Richard III of England, in the 15th century – and it’s hard to argue with her logic.

Few European countries have kings or queens today, only seven in all. But in the long span of European history, this is only a recent development. In 1900, every European state – barring France and Switzerland – was a monarchy. As for medieval Europe, it was, almost without exception, ruled by a patchwork of royal and imperial families. As a result, politics at the highest level was dynastic, revolving around the births, marriages and deaths of these families – not to mention their conflicts and alliances. Transmission of power was not a matter of elections but of biology.

Some of these dynasties were extremely successful at propagating their blood. Hugh Capet, who became king of the Franks in 987, was the ancestor in the direct male line of every French king down to 1848, nearly nine centuries later. Other medieval dynasties could not compete with this, but often held on to their thrones for several centuries.

But there are also examples of medieval kings – sometimes highly successful ones – who were the only members of their family to hold the throne. Matthias Corvinus, king of Hungary from 1458–90, was a great patron of Renaissance culture, yet was unable to secure the succession of his illegitimate son. The same is true of John Balliol, king of Scots from 1292–96, although his son Edward Balliol did make a prolonged effort to take back his father’s throne in the following century. And then there’s Harold Godwinson, whose sons were unable to reverse the defeat at Hastings in 1066, despite invading England two years later.

> **Suitors were offered a choice of sisters, and if one died, a younger sibling would be substituted**

Biological survival

A successful dynasty needed to do three things. The first was to defend itself against rival dynasties, something John Balliol and Harold Godwinson failed to do. The second, and fundamental, task was to ensure biological survival. The third was to find ways of containing and controlling competition within the dynasty.

It is clear that there might be a contradiction between these two last requirements. For instance, a king might seek to secure his dynasty by having large numbers of sons by various women. This was a practice common among Irish kings, a notable example being Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair (Turlough O’Connor), king of Connacht (1106–56), who had 22 sons by at least six partners. This did indeed mean that Connacht (or parts of it) remained under the rule of O’Connors down to the Tudor period but it also meant there were always many competing lines of the dynasty. Kings of Connacht were killed more often by brothers or cousins than by the English invaders.

Not many medieval kings had 22 sons. Most of them, especially after the early Middle Ages, accepted the concept of marriage as defined by the church: one wife at a time. Because of this, choice of a bride for a king or for the heir to the throne became a central obsession of dynastic politics, often involving negotiations about the future marriage of babies, or even, on rare occasions, their *actual* marriage. Henry, son of Henry II of England, was married to Margaret, daughter of the king of France, when he was five and she was two. There was contemporary criticism of this marriage of “little children still wailing in the cradle”, but it brought Henry II the important territory of the Norman Vexin as the bride’s dowry.

One fundamental decision that needed to be made about a dynasty’s marriage policy was whether a bride should be sought from a

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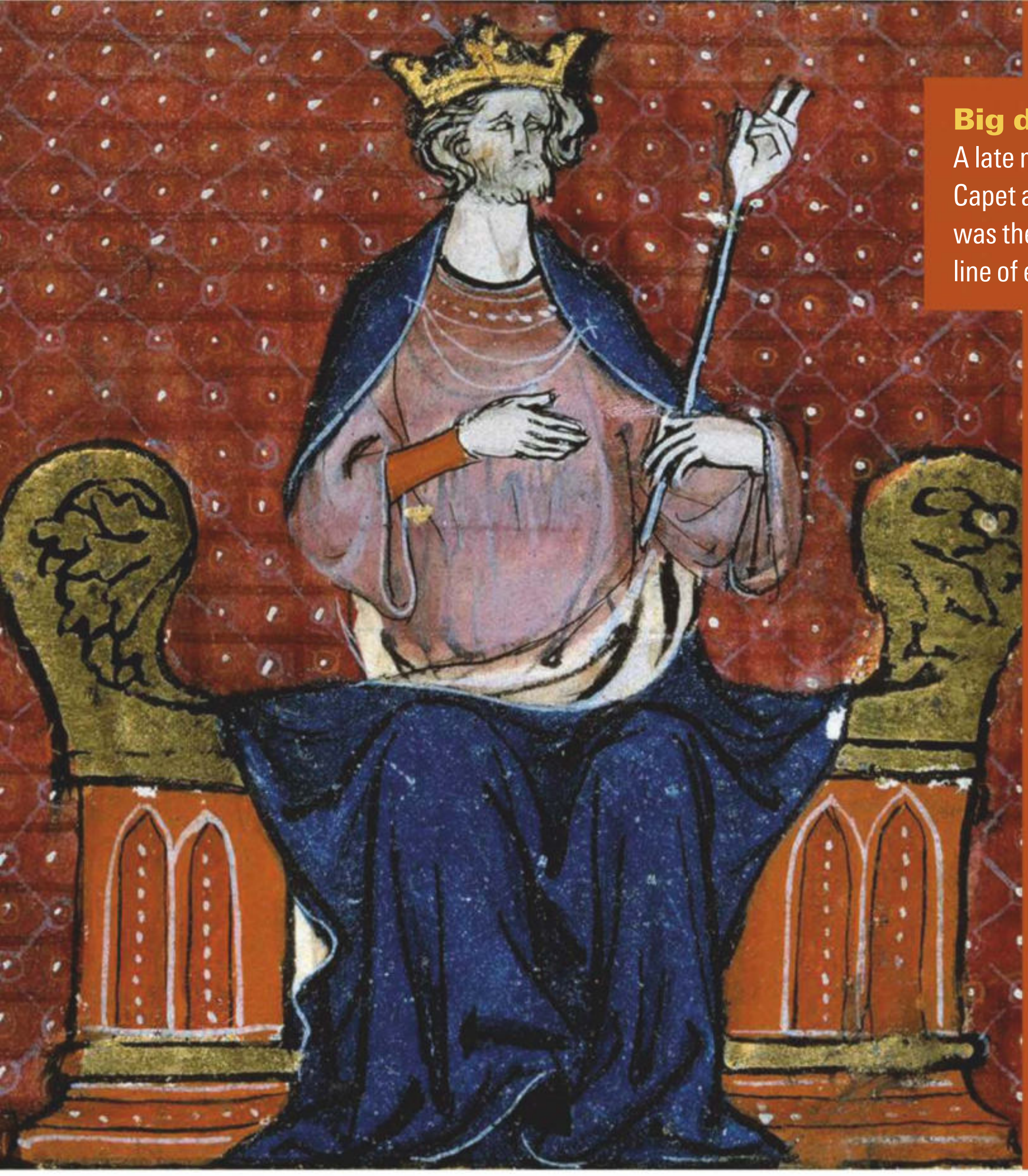
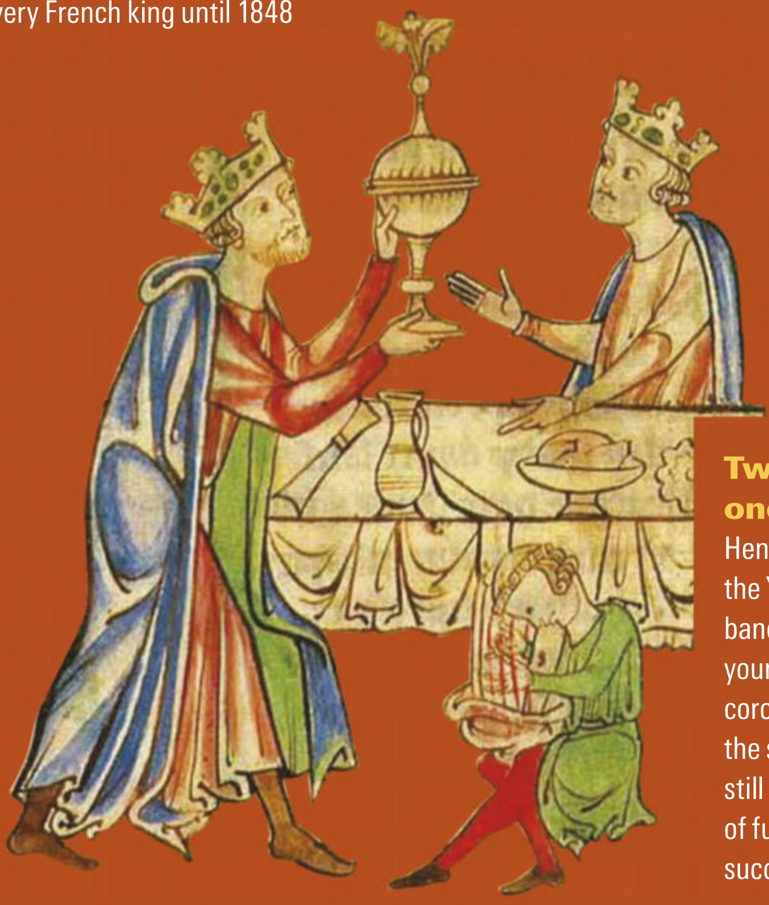


Big daddy
A late medieval depiction of Hugh Capet at his coronation in 987. Capet was the ancestor in the direct male line of every French king until 1848



Two kings, one throne
Henry II serves Henry the Young King at the banquet marking the younger man's coronation. Crowning the son while the father still lived was one way of future-proofing the succession

foreign royal family or from the local aristocracy. Both policies had their advantages and disadvantages, which were argued out. Indeed, in a later dynastic state, 18th-century Russia, a writer devised a fictional dialogue between a champion of the view that the tsar should marry a foreign princess and another who claimed he should marry one of his own subjects. The former, we're told, presented 40 arguments for his case, but the latter alleged he had 400!

Marriage to a high-born native lady allied the ruler to a noble family, which could be a source of strength, but it might also upset the balance of aristocratic politics, as occurred in the case of Edward IV of England. His marriage to Elizabeth Woodville in 1464 was the first between an English king and an English woman since 1066. But the subsequent promotion and enrichment of Woodville's relatives alienated many of Edward's own aristocratic supporters and led to his (temporary) dethronement in 1470.

Marriage to foreign princesses was also a way of creating alliances. The dynastic rather than personal nature of such transactions comes out most clearly when prospective husbands were offered a choice of sisters. It was also evident in marriage treaties that specified that, if one of the children involved should die, a younger sibling would be substituted.

Bonds between dynasties were at stake here, not the emotions of individuals. And these marriages often involved the bride going from one cultural world to another, perhaps even having to adopt a different name to fit in with the new environment. One Byzantine bride who came to the west to marry was criticised for her fancy ways, such as eating with a fork. The German aristocrat Berta, who went the other way to marry into the Byzantine imperial family, had to change her name to the Greek Irene but was still derided for not wearing eye makeup.

Naked fertility test

The purpose of all these endless marriage negotiations was to achieve the essential dynastic goal: the birth of a child, or, to be more precise in this highly patriarchal world, the birth of a son. A woman's fertility could not be known beforehand, though sometimes efforts were made. When French envoys came to Aragon in 1322 to examine the king's daughter as a potential bride for the king of France, they were instructed "to see her naked breast", since this would indicate her ability to have children, "which the king much desires" (she apparently failed this test).

Royal courts would always be obsessed with the wait for sons to be born. After long years of marriage without a pregnancy, or after giving birth only to girls, a queen would find her position vulnerable, and talk would begin about ways of getting rid of her. The church did not recognise divorce in the modern sense: the termination of a legal marriage. However, it did countenance annulment, that is, the declaration that that the union had never been a proper marriage at all, on various grounds, especially because the parties were too closely related. In the dense intermarried network of medieval royalty, such relationships ('prohibited degrees') were not too difficult to discover.

A famous example, with great political consequences, was the annulment of the marriage of Louis VII of France and Eleanor of Aquitaine, who had borne only daughters in the 15 years of their marriage. She was now available to marry again, was quickly sought out by the young Henry of Anjou and married him within months. She brought with her the huge duchy of Aquitaine, which was her inheritance, and gave him eight children including five sons. Perhaps if Louis had waited, she would have brought him sons, and he certainly would have kept Aquitaine out of the hands of his great rival, Henry, who became Henry II of England. The central role of the female body in this tale of high politics scarcely needs underlining.

Louis VII provides a good example of the way an entire reign could be dominated by the pursuit of a male heir. He married Eleanor just before his father's death in 1137 and had the marriage annulled in 1152. In 1153 or early 1154 he married again, to Constance, daughter of the king of Castile. Like Eleanor she gave him two daughters, dying during the birth of the second, in the autumn of 1160. Within a matter of weeks, Louis married for the third time, to Adela of Champagne, member of a great French noble family. By New Year 1165 it was clear that Adela was pregnant and tension mounted as she drew near to term in the summer of that year. Paris held its breath. A young student expressed the mood in verse:

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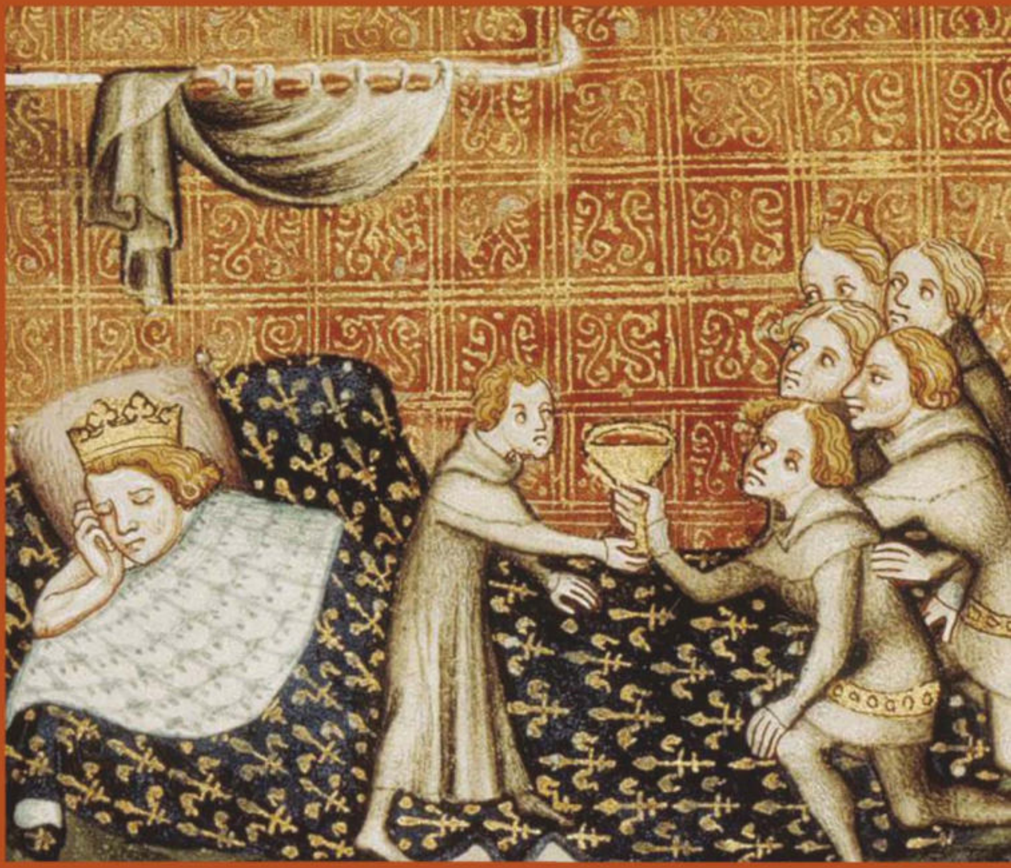
Fatal fall-out
A statue of the Aragonese ruler Alfonso 'the Battler' in Zaragoza. When Alfonso died childless in 1134, the state was forced to take extreme measures to ensure the succession



Dark dreams
A 14th-century illumination shows Louis VII having a vision of his son Philip making the barons drink human blood from a goblet

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"It was night and the queen was in labour in this famous childbirth;
the city beseeches you about this, O Christ, with wakeful prayer.
The eager wishes of the city beg that it be male;
the tearful court asks God for a male."

It was a male. Twenty-eight years into his reign, Louis VII finally had his son, who became Philip Augustus, one of the most successful French monarchs of the Middle Ages. The Capetian dynasty had hung on by a thread, and went on to pass the French throne directly from father to son for another six generations.

The death of a king without a son always meant political crisis. What happened in Aragon in 1134 shows this clearly. In that year Alfonso 'the Battler', who had been king of Aragon for 30 years, died from wounds received in fighting the Spanish Muslims. He left no children. Alfonso deserved his nickname: he had conquered the important Muslim city of Zaragoza and was respected as a warrior by his Muslim enemies, although they were bemused by the fact that he did not sleep with the daughters of the Muslim chiefs he captured. He had had a short and childless marriage and his only close male relative, his brother, had become a monk. In these circumstances, Alfonso made the unusual decision to bequeath his kingdom to the crusading Orders – the Templars, Hospitallers and Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

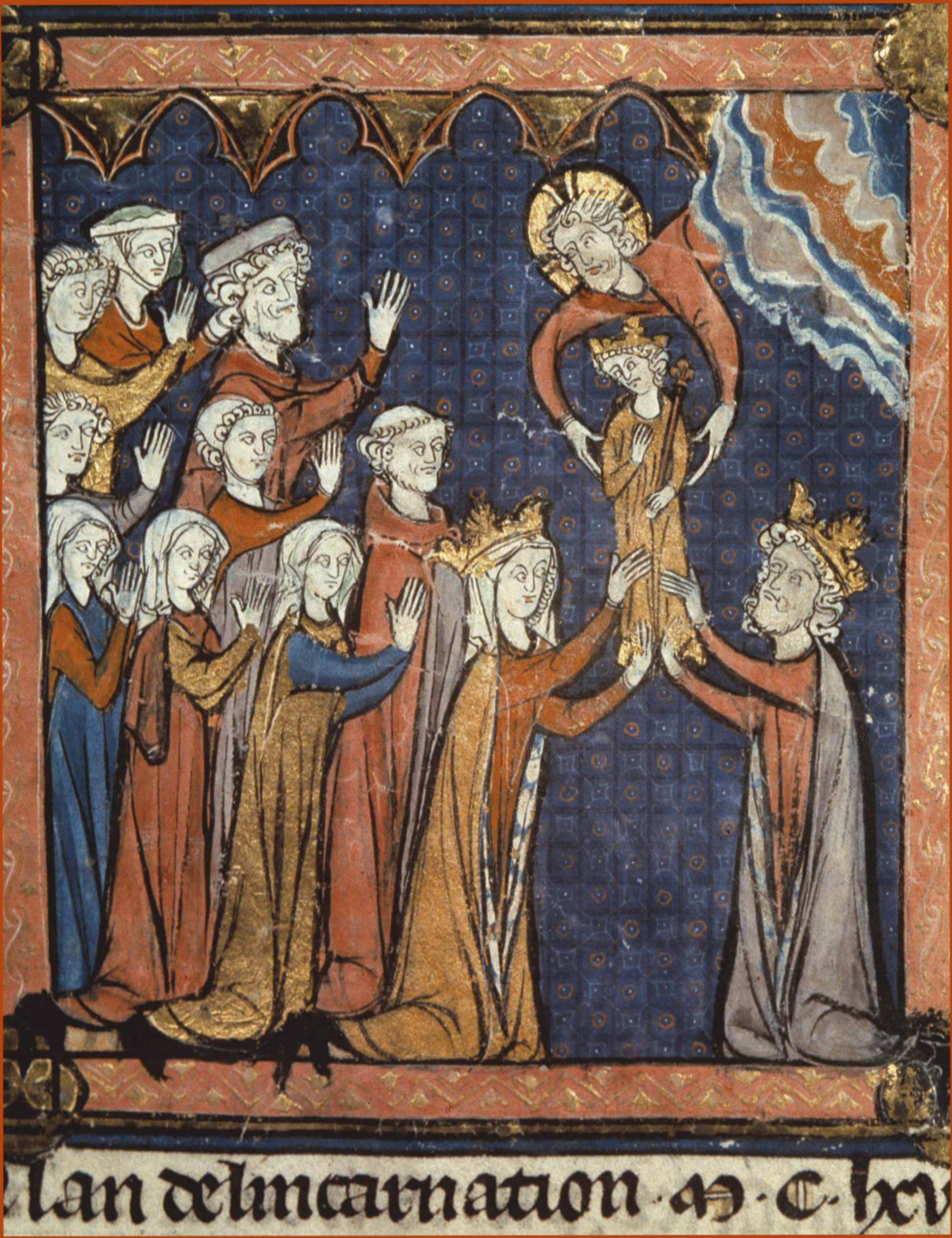
If Alfonso's will had been carried out, Aragon would have become the first state run by crusading Orders, of the type later exemplified by the Teutonic Knights in Prussia and the Hospitallers in Rhodes. However, the nobility of Aragon were not prepared for this to happen and took extraordinary steps to secure the survival of the native dynasty. Alfonso's brother, Ramiro the monk, was hauled out of his monastery, married to a noble French lady and only allowed to return to his monastic life after she had given birth to a child, a daughter named Petronilla. Even those who thought such proceedings were wrong understood the desire of the Aragonese to perpetuate 'the royal seed'.

The dead king's brother was hauled out of a monastery, and only allowed to return once he'd fathered an heir

Petronilla thus became queen of Aragon at the age of one. She would obviously need a protector and so was engaged to the powerful count of Barcelona, whose lands bordered Aragon. He was 23 years her senior and would have a long wait before sexual relations could begin. But, as she approached her 15th birthday, Petronilla became pregnant and awaited the birth in her husband's city of Barcelona, where, on 4 April 1152, she issued a document with no parallel. It began: "I, Petronilla, queen of Aragon, lying and labouring in childbirth at Barcelona…" She then made provision for the child that was imminently expected, whether it is a boy that "is to proceed from my womb, by God's will", or "if a daughter should proceed from my womb", and donated 2,000 gold coins to the churches of Aragon and Barcelona to pray for her. She gave birth to a healthy boy who became king after her. The 'royal seed' of Aragon was thus preserved.

Girl power

The Aragonese had been willing to accept rule by a queen from the native royal family in preference to other alternatives. But Petronilla was not the first female sovereign in medieval Europe. There had already been three ruling empresses in Byzantium, although none of them had been in power for long, and Aragon's neighbour, the kingdom of Leon and Castile, was ruled by Queen Urraca from 1109 to 1126. At the time of the Aragonese crisis of 1134 the ruler of the kingdom of Jerusalem, a European colony, was a woman, Queen Melisende. There were at least 27 female sovereigns in medieval Europe (including Jerusalem). While this patriarchal society preferred the rule of men, often justified on military grounds, women could be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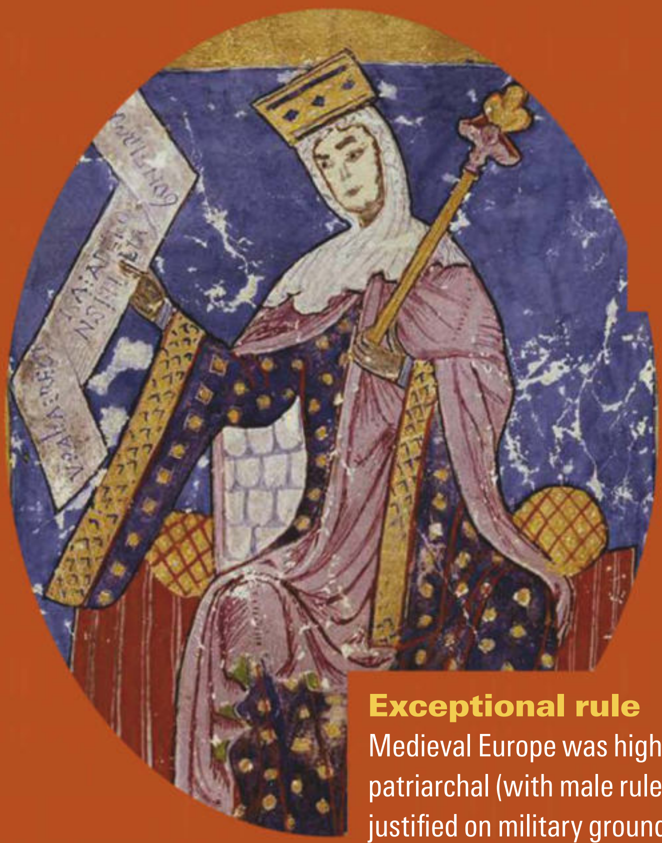
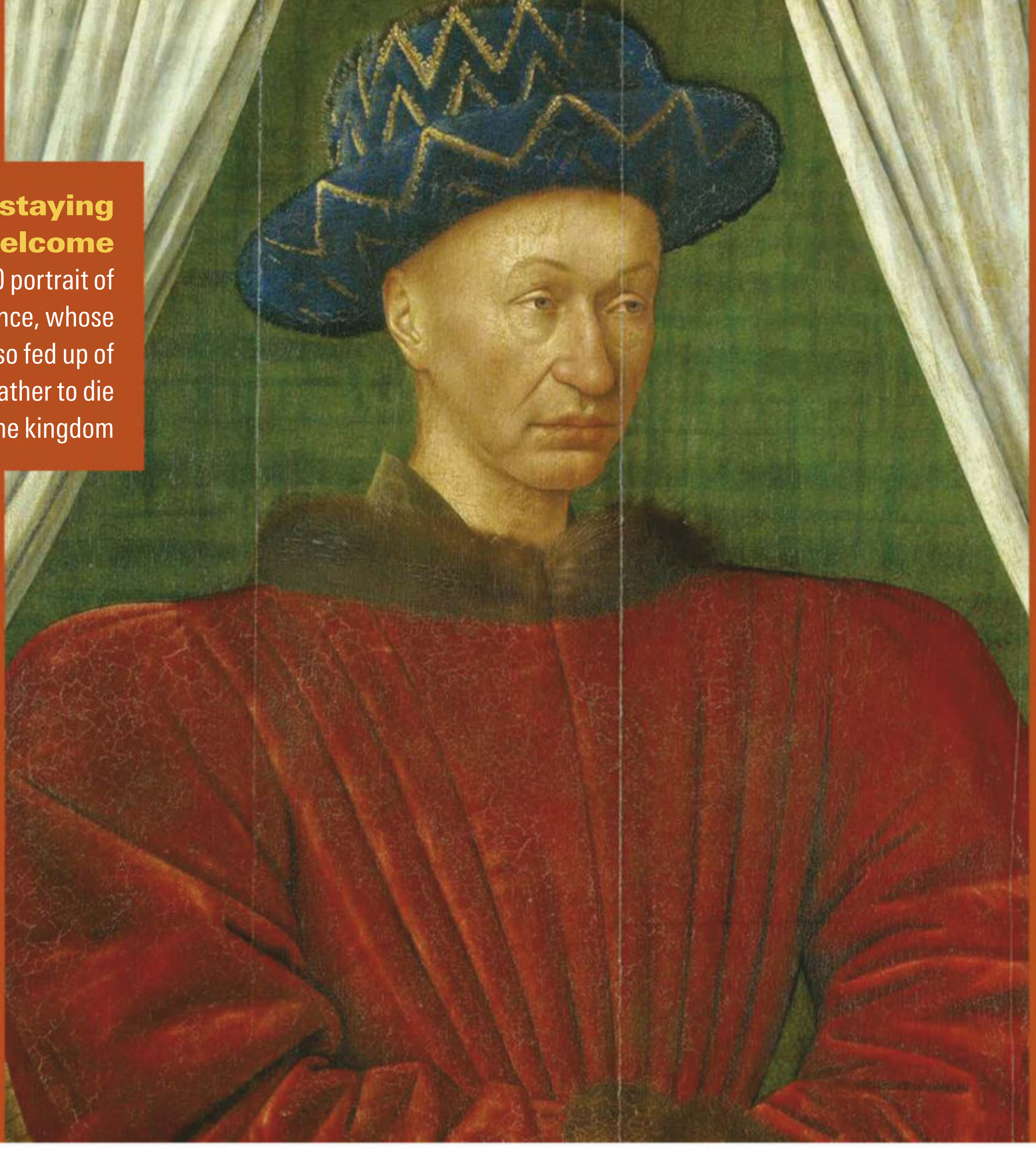
Special delivery Christ hands Louis VII and Adela of Champagne their son, ending Louis' 28-year quest for a male successor



Exceptional rule
Medieval Europe was highly patriarchal (with male rule being justified on military grounds) but a few women, such as Urraca of Leon and Castile (above), did wield power



Outstaying his welcome
A c1445–50 portrait of Charles VII of France, whose son Louis got so fed up of waiting for his father to die that he fled the kingdom

recognised as the bearers of dynastic claims if kings lacked sons.

But if the problem of dynastic continuity was solved by fertile marriages and the birth of sons, this left the other problem that dynasties faced: that of containing conflict and competition. Royal sons, including younger ones, were brought up to exercise command, to fight on horseback with lethal weapons, and to glory in their high blood. These proud young men had a high sense of their dignity and resented restrictions and limitations.

Even if the eldest was recognised as heir, perhaps being crowned in his father's lifetime, he might still think his father was taking a long time to die. Louis the Dauphin, son of Charles VII of France, "had, for a long time, desired to reign and to have the crown on his head", when, in 1456, he fled to the court of his father's enemy, the Duke of Burgundy. Louis didn't meet Charles for the last 14 years of the king's life – though that didn't stop him succeeding to the French throne five years after his flight.

Jealous siblings

Younger brothers also posed a threat to family unity, sometimes refusing to acquiesce in the privileged status of the eldest. In some dynastic systems their rights were recognised by a division of the kingdom on the old king's death. The giant Frankish kingdom was frequently divided between brothers or cousins in the early Middle Ages, although such divisions became rare after AD 1000.

> **Who would believe that German and French troops would die in 1870 or 1914 over a ninth-century dynastic division?**

Some of the most successful dynasties found ways of satisfying the claims of younger brothers and of harnessing their energies, as Louis IX of France (St Louis) did. His three brothers served him well, on the whole, all accompanying him on crusade, in which one died and one stood hostage as security for the king's ransom when he was captured.

All three brothers had been provided with huge lordships in France – which helps explain their loyalty. But this method had great dangers of its own. These apanages, large territorial endowments for younger brothers, might drift permanently out of the king's control. The Burgundian domains, which almost became a separate kingdom, started out in just this way.

Dynasties thus steered a perilous course between the threat of biological extinction and the chaos of conflict within the family.

There were other political systems in medieval Europe. Iceland and Venice, two places about as different as is possible to be, were both republics. The Holy Roman Empire, comprising Germany and north Italy, was always elective in theory, and elective in reality from 1254 to 1438, after which the Habsburgs established a monopoly of the imperial title.

But it was dynastic politics that left the deepest mark on Europe, a mark that can be seen to this day, both in the states that arose from dynastic unions, such as Spain, or those that arose from dynastic fission. France and Germany did not exist in the early Middle Ages and are the result of a family division between Charlemagne's grandsons. There was dispute over their boundaries, an argument that was still going on in the 20th century. Who would believe that some makeshift dynastic arrangement of the ninth century would be etched permanently on the map of Europe, and that young men might die for that line in 1870 or 1914, a thousand years after it was devised? The family politics of medieval Europe were, in a sense, family squabbles writ large, but sometimes they were writ very large indeed. H

Robert Bartlett is Bishop Wardlaw professor of medieval history emeritus at the University of St Andrews. His latest book, *Blood Royal: Dynastic Politics in Medieval Europe*, is published by Cambridge University Press in July

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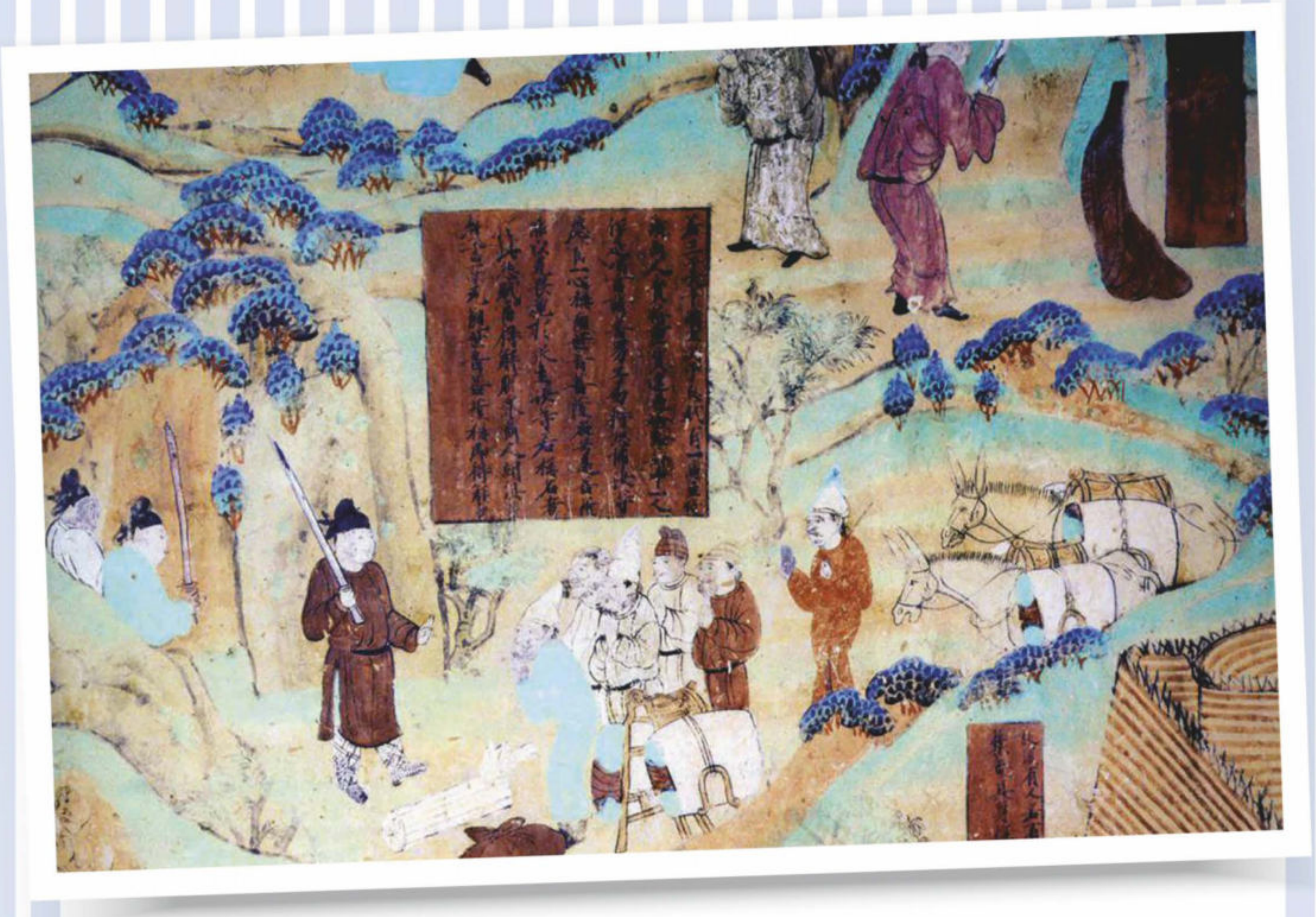

"History has, until very recently, focused heavily on western Europe"

The Silk Roads catapulted **Peter Frankopan** to the top of the bestseller lists. Five years on, as he's announced as chair of the jury for the 2020 Cundill Prize, he speaks to Matt Elton about the state of global history

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It's five years since your book *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World* was first published. What do you think has changed in global history since?
There's now a much more vigorous discussion about what 'global history' really is. As is often the case with such terms, its precise meaning can vary. For some people, it means drawing together big strands of history, which presents challenges as well as opportunities. For others, it means looking at parts of the world that have been left behind or ignored by the discipline – areas of study such as pre-Columbian America or southeast Asia, for instance.

But the thing that's changed most of all is that there is now a great awareness in the United Kingdom, both at a university level and among the general public, that history has up until very recently focused heavily on western Europe. For a long time, we were very narrow-minded about which aspects of the past we explored. But history books are less Eurocentric now, and that's a reflection of the fact that publishers and readers, at all levels, are increasingly open to the idea of looking at other parts of the world.

When I wrote *The Silk Roads* [which explores the ancient networks of trade and ideas that ran through Asia and the Middle East], I didn't think anybody was going to read it. I knew that most historians were working on 19th and 20th-century British, European and, to some extent, American history. But it turns out that the demand for global history *is* there – it's just a very difficult thing to do well.

What are the challenges of writing a good global history book?
It's challenging partly because the technical side of languages is not easy, and very few cultures are monolingual. I'm quite good on languages, but I remember meeting the historian Valerie Hansen at Yale – she's the author of this year's fantastic *The Year 1000* – and her rattling through a range of Sino-Tibetan and Tocharian languages. I had to look at my feet and think, well, I did quite well to be able to get through the 22 languages I read while I was writing *The Silk Roads*!

Another challenge is that, unlike those established, popular fields I mentioned above, in which a historical tradition has already built up, sometimes the less crowded fields of study involve doing some of the foundational work from scratch. Very basic questions about chronologies and sources just won't have been asked because the intention hasn't been there, and because it's an empty field means it's going to take longer to develop. But the fact that there are now readers out there who want to be informed about all kinds of areas of the past is great for history writers – because the more that's written and the more that's read on any given subject, the better.

Are there certain things that you think mark out a particularly good global history book, or that you particularly look for?
I tend to look for work that includes a great deal of detail. Normally, that means close engagement with primary sources and work to better understand their context. You often encounter broad-brush histories that are generally unobjectionable, but the detailing isn't there. Indeed, it seems that an increasing number of books are being produced that don't have any footnotes at all. When I told my publishers for *The Silk Roads* that I was going to include 2,500 footnotes, they were completely fine about it. But I've been surprised to hear, when I've spoken to a few early-career scholars recently, that their commercial publishers have restricted what they put in their notes or set a maximum number of books for the bibliographies.

That's worrying because I think that really good history works from the primary sources outwards. It's true that it's not always easy to work through those kinds of texts, or to know how best to look at material written a long time ago in different ways and formats than we're used to. And it's not just the written materials, either: it's also the study of legal texts, inscriptions, religion and so on. But really good history should ensure that it satisfies the general reader *and* avoids making academic historians get their pencils out to crossly underline everything.

Food of the gods A pre-Columbian statue representing a maize deity. The cultures of the Americas in the years before the arrival of Europeans deserve more extensive study, argues Peter Frankopan

PREVIOUS PAGE:
An eighth-century depiction of travellers being held up by bandits on the Silk Roads of central Asia. "We're still very bad at finding and incorporating the scholarship of historians outside of the west," says Frankopan

BRIDGEMAN

Is it the case that too little non-western history is being written outside the west?
I think we're still very bad at finding, reading and incorporating the scholarship of historians writing in parts of the world outside of the west. A lot of the work being done on non-western countries is through western institutions, and to some extent that's a reflection of the global state of affairs and of the wealth that goes into education.

Non-western scholars can earn far more money in the US or the UK than they might domestically, even taking the cost of living into account. So a lot of the engine of history writing, if you like, is in western Europe and North America. But, having said that, there are still fantastically good scholars writing about their own parts of the world outside of the west, too.

Which books or authors have stood out for you over the past few years?
There are quite a few! Walter Scheidel has written a fantastic book, *Escape from Rome: The Failure of Empire and the Road to Prosperity*, about empires and how they hang together and how they fall. I've been reading Daniel Markey's terrific *China's Western Horizon: Beijing and the New Geopolitics of Eurasia*, about China and the way it sees its western provinces and Silk Roads.

Corey Ross's *Ecology and Power in the Age of Empire: Europe and the Transformation of the Tropical World* is also great, on the way in which colonialism had an impact on how we look at the natural world. And Sujit Sivasundaram, a colleague of mine at Cambridge, has written a really exciting book on Oceania, *Waves Across the South: A New History of Revolution and Empire*, exploring centuries of global history from the perspective of the peoples of the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

I'm a voracious reader, too, and never quite know where that's going to lead me. Some of the things I read aren't books at all, but instead reports issued by banks, for instance, or the findings of non-governmental organisations in south Asia. I think it's important to be open-minded, because one of the problems about becoming a historian, particularly an academic historian, is that you have your tramlines of what your 'subject' is. Staying within those tramlines is tricky, particularly if you're in a very populated field, because there are a lot of people working within it and using the same materials. So I've always been tempted to look over the sides of those tramlines to see what else is happening.

In a funny way, lockdown has probably made that easier because time has become, for many of us, much more elastic. I've been using it as an opportunity to try to broaden my mind. I think one of the challenges we have in education is that we think education stops when you finish university or you finish your PhD. But I'm very interested in the idea of what education should mean for a middle-aged man like me, who's got the time and ability to access materials and read in a way that isn't haphazard.

And it sounds as if you think some of the value of that is in making links across different subjects and types of evidence.
Yes, that's true. A few years ago, somebody asked me what it is that I'm most interested in, and it made me stop and think. Instinctively, I'd use geography or chronology to answer – the Byzantine empire, for instance, or the period from 284 until 1453 – but, actually, what I'm really interested in is the history of connections and exchanges. I'm interested in trying to find ways of joining the dots together and discovering parallels across periods, places and cultures.

Part of the challenge is to not close off any doors, but that's what makes me wake up every day excited to be a historian. I love 12th and 13th-century Byzantium, and I'm sure I'd be thrilled to solely research that. But I do like the fact that I can drift off into South America and think about isotopes of maize, or into Asia Minor to think about where wheat is grown, and so on. Sometimes what you're looking at doesn't solve any problems, but it raises new methodologies that help you think about your own backyard a bit better.

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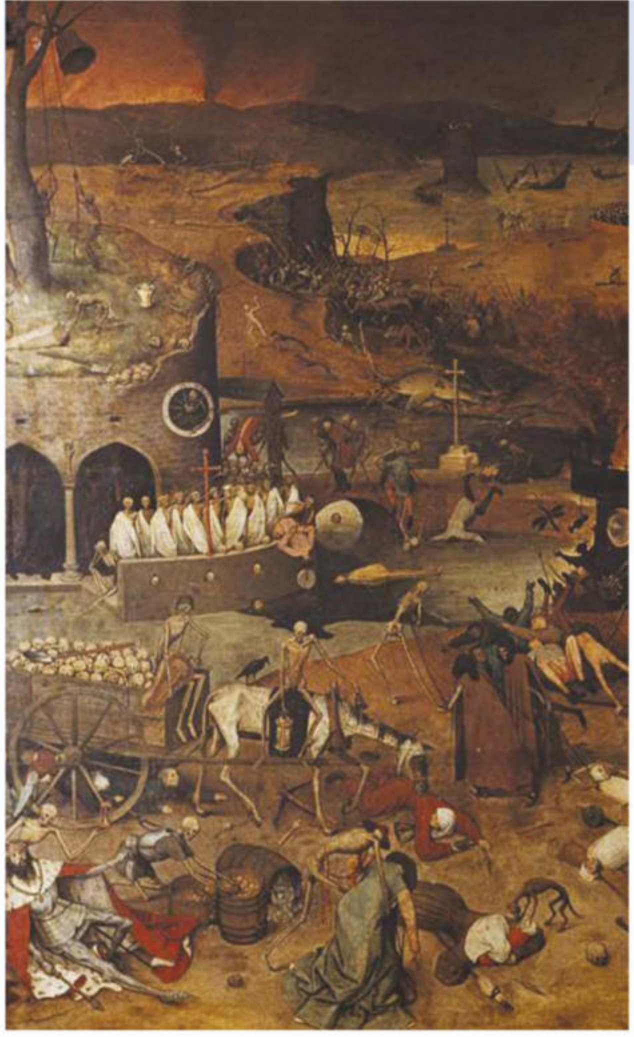

Plague strikes Pieter Bruegel the Elder's c1562 *The Triumph of Death*. Writers such as Monica Green have highlighted disease's role in human history

New horizons Fasil Ghebbi, a 17th-century fortress city in Gondar, Ethiopia. Historians must pay more attention to non-western nations, says Frankopan

> **" Disease is number one on the list of things that affect everyone – but we've been much more interested in looking at how humans kill each other "**

You mentioned Valerie Hansen's book earlier. I wondered what your thoughts were about her argument, which – put very broadly – is that globalisation started much sooner than we often think, not in the year 1492 with Columbus and da Gama but in around AD 1000?
Valerie is terrific, and has been working on the Silk Roads for years. She's an inspiration to me in many different ways, so it's probably not a surprise that I broadly agree with her argument that globalisation is nothing new. I might even push its start date back another 1,000 years, because we can find exchanges going on then – and even before that.

I've talked about all of this with her, though, and I certainly wouldn't argue with the points she makes in her book. Indeed, I think that terms such as 'globalisation' and 'the Silk Roads' are, in a way, the least interesting aspects to focus on. What Valerie's really doing in her book is painting a picture of the deeply interconnected world of the year 1000. That's the hook that allows her to talk about pre-Columbian and Central American cultures, and about regions of the world from south-east Asia to Ethiopia. I'm very taken with the idea of trying to find a good excuse to write about those kinds of things, and Valerie does it very well. She writes lucidly and beautifully, too, so I'm not surprised it's had such good reviews. I'm a real fan.

The past five years have been full of incident, from political unrest to social changes to huge international stories such as the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Do you think that such things make it more important than ever to properly understand global history?
It's the other way around: global history should start with a need to understand which things really affect everybody. Disease is probably number one on that list, but we have been much more focused on looking at how humans kill each other – episodes such as the rise of the Third Reich – than how the biological side of things work. Again, we're getting much better at this, and writers such as Monica Green have been real trailblazers in trying to put disease at the centre of our understanding of history.

I talked earlier about the need to look outside of the tramlines of your subject area, and this is an example of the way in which just being able to read and to write intelligently isn't enough. The current pandemic demonstrates that historians also need to be able to understand genomic materials, DNA, and indeed the sciences more generally.

Another trend of the past few years has been the rise of a kind of populist nationalism. Do you think that its growth challenges our view of a globalised world, or is it a distraction from more important patterns?
Leaders who pander to their majorities are deeply recognisable in long-distance history as well as in the recent past, so I think that populism isn't at all new – and, in some ways, isn't even necessarily that interesting. Leaders like to stay in power; they like to mobilise, polarise and antagonise; they like to get people angry and turn on each other – and you can see that in many different areas of history. The Roman emperor Theodosius I, for instance, was supposedly so popular because he was good at cracking jokes and winning people over, and knew how important it was to have wide public support.

So, in that sense, it can be misleading to think that what we're seeing in the 21st century, in phenomena such as the Brexit vote or Donald Trump's presidency in the United States, is somehow brand new or a unique challenge. What happened in those two cases wasn't nearly as seismic as what happened in the French Revolution or the Russian Revolution, for instance.

But I'm not making any predictions about where things might go. We might be reading this interview on a desert island in a year's time, thinking: "Gosh, how did we not see what was coming?" As we speak, big fences are being put up outside the White House in Washington and US troops being recalled to their barracks – so nothing is off the cards.

How can we meaningfully see the recent past in the context of longer history, then?
We should start by recognising that there are historical parallels, rather than thinking that we are somehow the special ones living through an era of enormous, unprecedented change. I'd still rather be alive in 2020, with the coronavirus pandemic, climate change and Trump in the White House, than during either of the two world wars in almost any part of the world. Sometimes those parallels are less reassuring. Consider the Black Lives Matter movement, for instance: a lack of dignity and equality in society isn't new. But in some ways, historians have become part of the problem. Accounts of the past have failed to properly address persecution, so young people grow up thinking that Britain deserves credit for abolishing slavery rather than being one of the great beneficiaries. By excluding peoples, cultures and even entire continents from accounts of the past, bias, prejudice and ignorance have become entrenched. Apart from the ancient Egyptians, for example, no one hears about Africa's rich and complex past; India before the Raj (and possibly the Mughals) is a blank page. So we need to be much better at joining the dots, being inclusive and giving a fuller picture of the past.

People power A coin depicting Roman emperor Theodosius I, whose appeals to mass public approval may make him a forerunner of today's populists

BLACK LIVES MATTER
FIGHT FOR EQUALITY
SAY THEIR NAMES

A fight for justice Black Lives Matter activists in Seattle, June 2020. "Accounts of the past have failed to properly address persecution," says Peter Frankopan

> **"Consider the Black Lives Matter movement: a lack of dignity and equality in society isn't new. But in some ways, historians have become part of the problem"**

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Finally, what global history books do you think still need to be written?
David Abulafia's fantastic book *The Boundless Sea* explains how oceans and waterways have been connectors but also barriers to human exploration and exchange across tens of thousands of years. I think it's incredibly important to look at maritime routes as well as those that go across land, and we could probably do with more exploration of that.

There also are whole parts of the world we don't spend a great deal of time thinking about, subsaharan Africa being just one such example. Because imperial cultures such as Britain and France have held the world's purse strings for the past 300 or 400 years, the regions they have controlled, and those in which their scholars have been interested, have been the ones that have had the most intensive research done on them. And, of course, those are also the regions which have experienced the most intensive pillaging of artefacts to fill those lovely museums.

But it's not just geographical spread that needs attention: there are a lot of time periods we could look at in more detail, too. The so-called 'Dark Ages', for instance – or 'Late Antiquity', as we now call it – is one. But even that's become a much fuller field in the past 20 years than it was before, with historians including Peter Brown, Averil Cameron and Peter Sarris doing fantastic work in pushing it forward. Indeed, it's generally true that, if you look hard enough within the work on a specific period or region, you'll find outstanding scholars. So it's as much about finding the oxygen to get their books on to people's reading lists and into their hands.

Peter Frankopan is professor of global history at Worcester College, University of Oxford, and the author of *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World* (Bloomsbury, 2015). He is chair of the jury for the 2020 Cundill History Prize, of which our website, HistoryExtra, is a media partner. See *cundillprize.com* for more details

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ALAMY

The Antichrist?

For centuries Emperor Nero has occupied a place in history's hall of infamy, courtesy of tales of Christian burning, wife beating and mother murdering. Yet does he truly deserve his diabolical reputation? **Shushma Malik** considers the evidence

In the late 19th century, the French philosopher Ernest Renan wrote a seven-volume history of Christianity. It was a vast, wide-ranging publication, spanning centuries and continents. Yet one of these volumes was dedicated entirely to the reign of one man: the Roman emperor Nero.

Nero ascended to power in AD 54 following the death of his step-father, Claudius. Fourteen chaotic, blood-spattered years later it was all over, Nero dying – perhaps by his own hand – at the climax of a rebellion against his rule. But this, Renan said, wasn't the last the world would see of him. Nero would return to Earth again, and his second coming would signal the time of the apocalypse. "The name for Nero has been found," the philosopher declared. "Nero shall be the *Antichrist.*"

Renan's assertion was a bold one, but it was hardly original. Historians had been casting Nero as the epitome of evil – stitching a straight line between Rome's fifth emperor and the end of the world – since the third century. And their lambasting of his reputation has stuck: today, everyone with an interest in ancient history 'knows' that Nero was one of the worst of all Rome's emperors.

But is what everyone 'knows' true? Surely, before accepting history's verdict, we should re-examine the sources, and ask ourselves what motivated the emperor's many detractors, and how material evidence can help to flesh out the picture. Only then can we answer the question of why Nero's reputation is so utterly dismal – and indeed if his diabolical image is entirely deserved.

Mutilated by dogs

There are a number of reasons why, for almost 2,000 years, historians have lined up to denigrate Nero. But the most important is surely that his reign saw the first persecution of the Christians.

In AD 64, a fire ripped through Rome, devastating 10 of its 14 districts. After the conflagration, Nero embarked on an ambitious rebuilding programme – one that, according to the Roman historian Tacitus, he tackled with such gusto that many Romans soon suspected that he'd ordered the fire to be started in the first place.

Nero sought to quell these rumours and, to do that, he needed a scapegoat. That, Tacitus tells us, is where the Christians came in. For the crime of starting the fire, Nero punished this already unpopular religious sect by setting up a display in his own gardens at which the condemned were mutilated and killed by dogs. Another punishment saw the victims fixed to crucifixes and set alight to burn as lamps at night.

This truly horrific account understandably grabbed the attention of early Christians.

Marble monstrosity
A first-century AD head of Nero. Historians have been portraying Rome's fifth emperor as the epitome of evil for almost 2,000 years

When a noblewoman named Algasia asked Jerome (who translated the Bible into Latin in the early fifth century) to interpret the "man of lawlessness" (the Antichrist figure) in Paul's 2 Thessalonians, his reply was emphatic: "Nero, the impurest of the Caesars oppresses the world."

However, the burning of Christians was far from the only event in Nero's reign to earn him the title Antichrist. The fifth-century historian Sulpicius Severus wrote that the emperor "showed himself in every way most abominable and cruel, and at length even went so far as to be the murderer of his own mother". Here, Sulpicius borrows from earlier, non-Christian historians to demonstrate the depth of Nero's iniquity. And those historians gave Christian writers like Sulpicius a lot of material to work with.

Our three main historical accounts for Nero's life come from Tacitus (writing a generation after Nero's death), Suetonius (a contemporary of Tacitus), and Cassius Dio (writing a couple of generations later than the other two). All three writers invariably describe Nero as a violent fratricide, matricide and uxoricide (wife-killer). They accuse the emperor of murdering his step-brother Britannicus for fear that he might usurp his position, and of having his mother, Agrippina, put to death because she was too overbearing. He was also responsible for the demise of two of his three wives: the first, Octavia, because he had fallen for a woman called Poppaea; the second was Poppaea herself, kicked to death in a fit of rage.

Another of Nero's 'crimes' was to be a lover of all things Greek. While Greek tradition played an important role in Rome (young elite males were often sent to Greece to be educated by the best orators), to be too enamoured with the culture was seen as a weakness. Romans, it was believed, should prefer Roman activities such as politics and war. Unfortunately, the Nero we read about far preferred the theatre and sexual promiscuity.

Not only did Nero enjoy watching theatrical performances, he also loved appearing

The historian Sulpicius Severus wrote that Nero "showed himself in every way most abominable and cruel"

REIGN OF TERROR

Six of Nero's most infamous crimes

Poisoning his brother

Nero's earliest alleged crime was the poisoning of his step-brother, Britannicus. As the natural son of Claudius, the previous emperor, Britannicus may have been expected to assume power. Unfortunately for him, however, he was only 13 when his father died in AD 54. And so it was Nero, whom Claudius had adopted as his son in AD 50, who became emperor.

Nero, we are told, was wary of his step-brother, fearing that he might go on to threaten his position. And so, at a dinner in early AD 55, Nero took matters into his own hands, apparently poisoning Britannicus's drink. When the boy was taken ill, the emperor assured everyone that he had suffered an epileptic fit and would recover. Britannicus died later that night.

Britannicus – shown with his mother, Valeria Messalina – paid with his life in AD 55 for being a perceived threat to Nero's throne

Murdering his mother

The death of Nero's mother, Agrippina, in AD 59 marked a sea change in Nero's reign. From this point on, our sources tell us, the emperor could exercise his every depravity.

Following a long power struggle that had led to her exile, Nero had resolved to have his mother killed. But doing so risked angering the Roman public: not only was Agrippina the mother of the current emperor, she was the widow of the previous one (Claudius) – and she was also a descendant of Rome's first emperor, Augustus, in her own right. Nero's solution was to try and make her death look like an accident – by arranging for the ship taking her home from a dinner at the Bay of Naples to collapse and sink. The vessel did indeed collapse, but Agrippina managed to swim to shore. In a panic, Nero had his mother stabbed, and used the spurious excuse that she had been conspiring against him.

Agrippina crowns her son Nero. He thanked her by having her stabbed to death

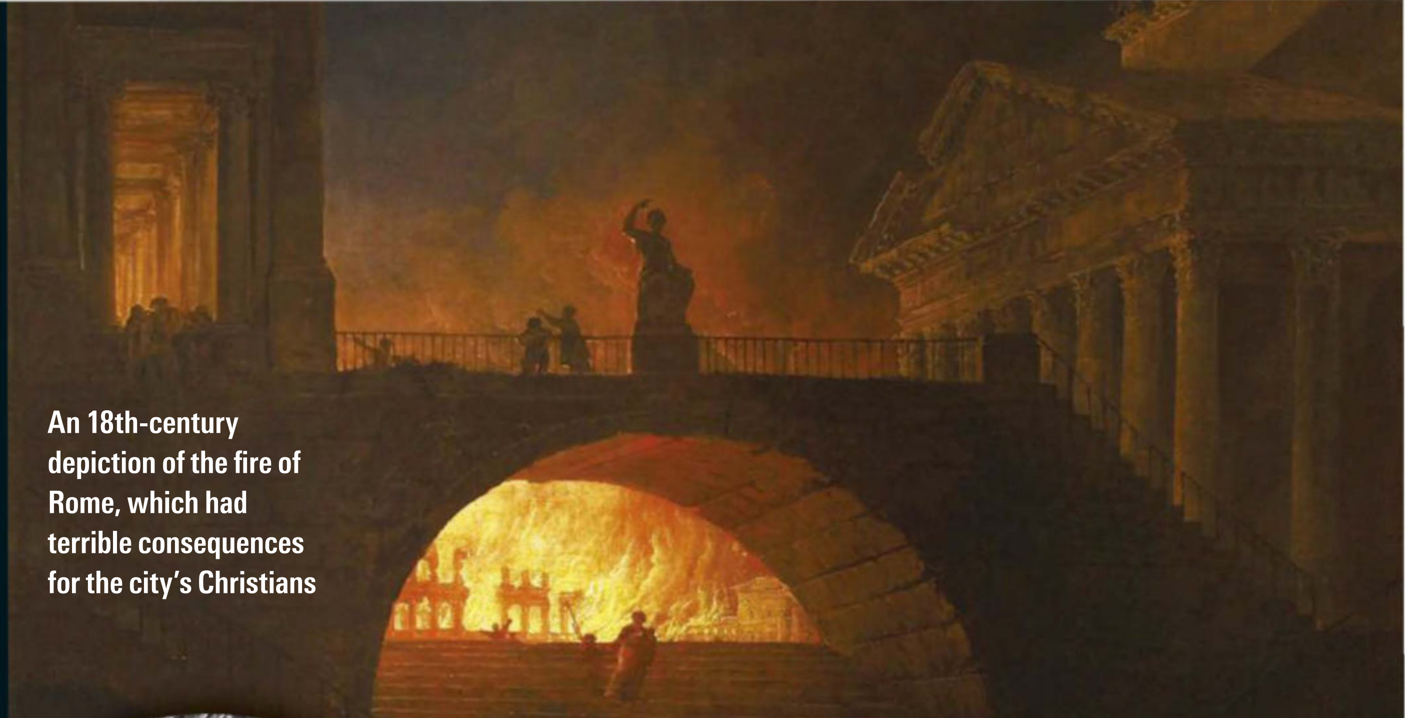
ALAMY/BRIDGEMAN

Causing the death of two wives

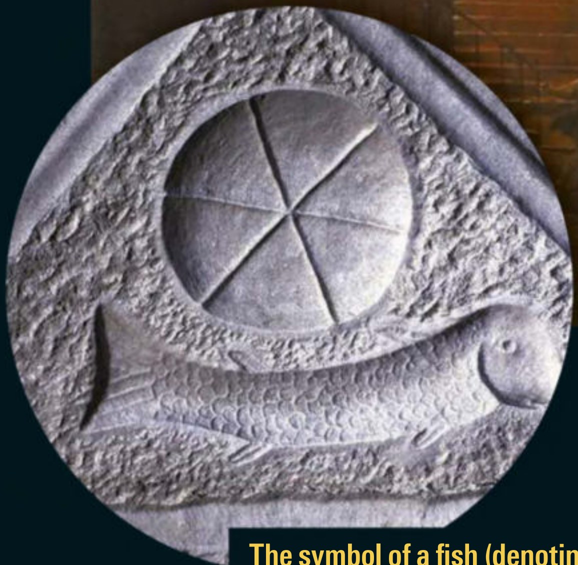
As if killing his stepbrother and mother weren't enough, Nero also stands accused of murdering two of his three wives. The first, Octavia, was popular among the Roman people, but that wasn't enough to save her when Nero fell in love with someone else. The sources suggest that Nero's first move against Octavia was to send her into exile, before quickly realising that she remained a threat to his popularity while she was still alive. And so, in AD 62, he sent agents to kill her, only to discover that she had taken her own life before those agents could arrive.

Nero's second wife, Poppaea, died after the emperor kicked her in a fit of rage. While Nero had put a lot of planning into Octavia's death, Poppaea's demise was far more spontaneous – and Nero's guilt was described as genuine and immense.

A statue thought to be of Nero's second wife, Poppaea, who died after a kick to the stomach



An 18th-century depiction of the fire of Rome, which had terrible consequences for the city's Christians



The symbol of a fish (denoting Christ) below a representation of the bread of the Eucharist on a second-century AD sarcophagus

Burning Christians

In AD 64, swathes of Rome were consumed by flames. Fires were extremely common in the city, but this one was large, and lasted for more than a week.

Did Nero order Rome to be set ablaze, as part of a dastardly ploy to raze the city so it could be rebuilt as he saw fit? That's the rumour that swirled around the city in the following months and years – though many of our sources are sceptical about its veracity.

To head-off the rumours that he was responsible for the fire, the emperor and his advisors sought out a scapegoat – and found one in Christianity. Members of this new religious sect were hounded, hunted down, tortured by dogs and burned on crucifixes at night – securing Nero's place in infamy for nearly 2,000 years.

Part of Nero's Golden House – proof, for some, that the emperor lacked any semblance of self-restraint

Plundering the imperial treasury

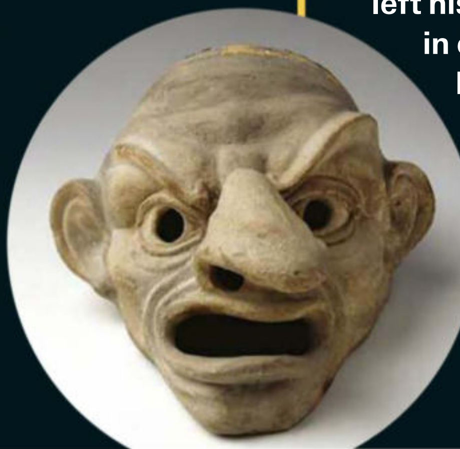
In AD 64, Nero ordered an enormous palace to be constructed for him on the Palatine and Esquiline hills, right in the heart of the ancient city. The palace was never finished, but it was soon being described as the 'Golden House', owing to the immensely luxurious decorations that adorned it.

If any building symbolised Nero's profligate nature, and his obsession with extravagance, the Golden House was surely it. Yet it was far from the only example: the emperor even used an emerald (or similar precious green stone) as a magnifying glass, saying that the colour gave everything a more pleasing appearance.

For later generations of historians, his crime was both financial and moral – he plundered the imperial treasury, and he also failed to show the sort of restraint appropriate for a leading Roman male.

Taking to the stage

Ronald Reagan may have made the transition from actor to world leader, but Nero wasn't so successful in undertaking the journey in reverse. Part of the problem was that he insisted on acting and singing on stage *during* his reign, at a time when acting was widely viewed as a lower-class pursuit. He first appeared on stage in public in Naples (AD 64), and in AD 66 he left Rome for more than a year to take part in a series of competitions in Greece. Nero left his freedman (a freed slave) Helios in charge at Rome – an act for which his later biographers condemned him without hesitation.



A Greek theatrical mask from the first or second century BC. Acting was not a pursuit regarded worthy of an emperor

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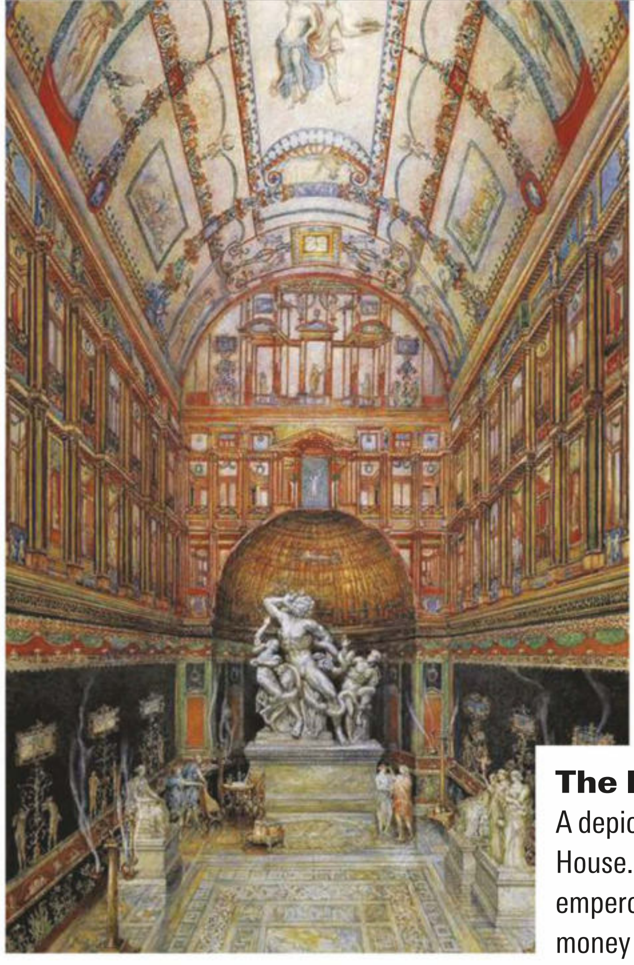


The lap of luxury A depiction of the much-derided Golden House. Nero was far from the only emperor to spend obscene amounts of money on personal building projects

While the people of Rome were obsessing over Nero's private life, those in Greece were more likely celebrating his military gains

in them – which he did for the first time in Naples in AD 64. In Rome, actors were predominately at the bottom of the social ladder. This made the emperor's wish to take to the stage all the more scandalous.

Just as damning was Nero's obsession with opulence. This was exemplified by his Golden House, which was so named for the profusion of precious metals, gems and artworks that adorned it. While emperors were allowed to flaunt their wealth and status, Nero, it was widely believed, had taken it way too far.

If Nero's ostentation offended Romans' sense of propriety, the allegations that he had entered into 'mock' marriages with two men were considered by many to be beyond the pale. The first of these spouses, Sporus, became Nero's wife, but the second, known as either Doryphorus ('spear-bearer') or Pythagoras, he took as a husband. Nero and Pythagoras "devised a kind of game", Suetonius tells us, "in which, covered with the skin of some wild animal, he [Nero] was let loose from a cage and attacked the private parts of men and women, who were bound to stakes".

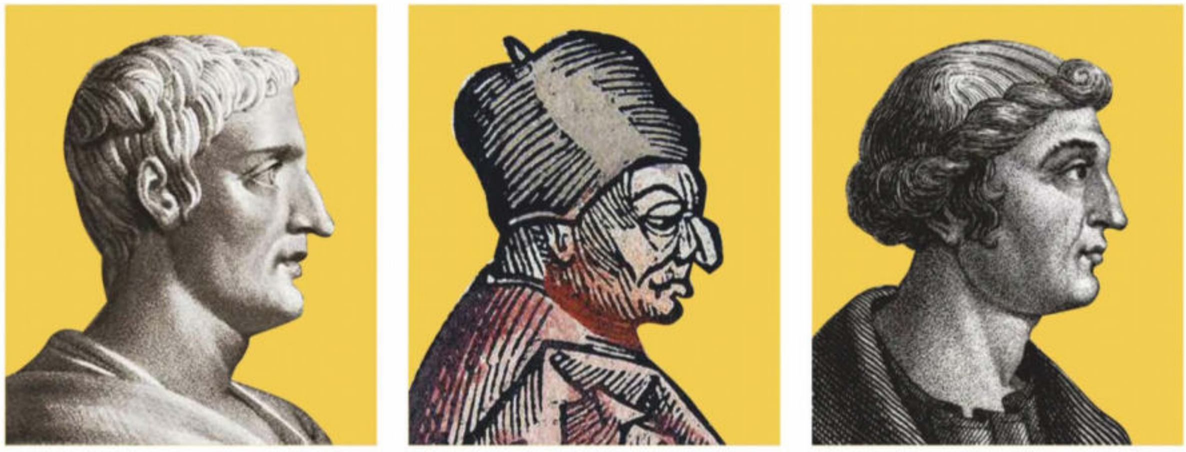
Such rumours simply confirmed what many Romans already suspected: that Nero was a cruel, feckless libertine who undermined Roman values in his enthusiasm for a life of depravity and dissolution.

Not the full picture

The evidence against Nero appears overwhelming. But before accepting history's devastating verdict, we should acknowledge that Tacitus, Suetonius and Dio's evidence is full of holes. At best, the picture they paint is only partially complete.

What we must remember when reading these stories is that our surviving sources were written by authors who had never met Nero – men who were either very young, or yet to be born, when the emperor ruled. None of these men were writing contemporary history – and all had their own reasons for sticking in the knife.

Tacitus and Suetonius both began their careers during the dynasty that followed the Julio-Claudians, the Flavians, and were likely writing at some point in the reigns of Trajan (98–117) and Hadrian (117–138) respectively. This lapse in time is crucial: it made the Julio-Claudian period a safe(r) space for writers to explore the strengths and weaknesses of Rome's imperial system. And while Tacitus's verdict on Nero was undeniably negative, it has to be noted that none of the Julio-Claudians come out of his *Annals* particularly well.



The hit squad Tacitus, Suetonius and Cassius Dio (shown left to right) are our three main historical sources for Nero. Yet their verdicts aren't necessarily representative of contemporary accounts of his life

Tacitus trained his focus on the fields of politics and war. He was scathing of the sycophantic senators who acquiesced in Nero's whims, and he used the Roman general Corbulo, whom Nero sent to Armenia to battle the Parthians, to highlight the inadequacies in military matters of the emperor and those close to him.

Suetonius, by contrast, was largely uninterested in the war in Armenia. He preferred to address Nero's lust for violence, love of luxury and sexual proclivities – as his description of the emperor's bedroom antics with Pythagoras proves. This approach provides colourful anecdotes but it poses a problem for historians attempting to get somewhere near the truth. Suetonius must rely on hearsay and rumours for his evidence, some of which, he claims, were still circulating in his own time. While senate affairs were officially recorded, what Nero got up to in the confines of his palace was not.

Cassius Dio wrote his accounts of Nero even later than Suetonius and Tacitus – he began his career in Rome as a young senator during the reign of Commodus (177–192) – yet it is to him that we must turn for our only detailed account of Nero's trip to Greece. Dio, in contrast to our other writers, does not see Nero as a lover of Greece, but rather as someone who tormented the province with his presence. The sight of an emperor on stage was tortuous enough, but Dio's Nero truly plumbed the depths, executing a large number of leading men and women and instructing their families to gift half of their inherited property to Rome. In short, he 'waged war' on Greece.

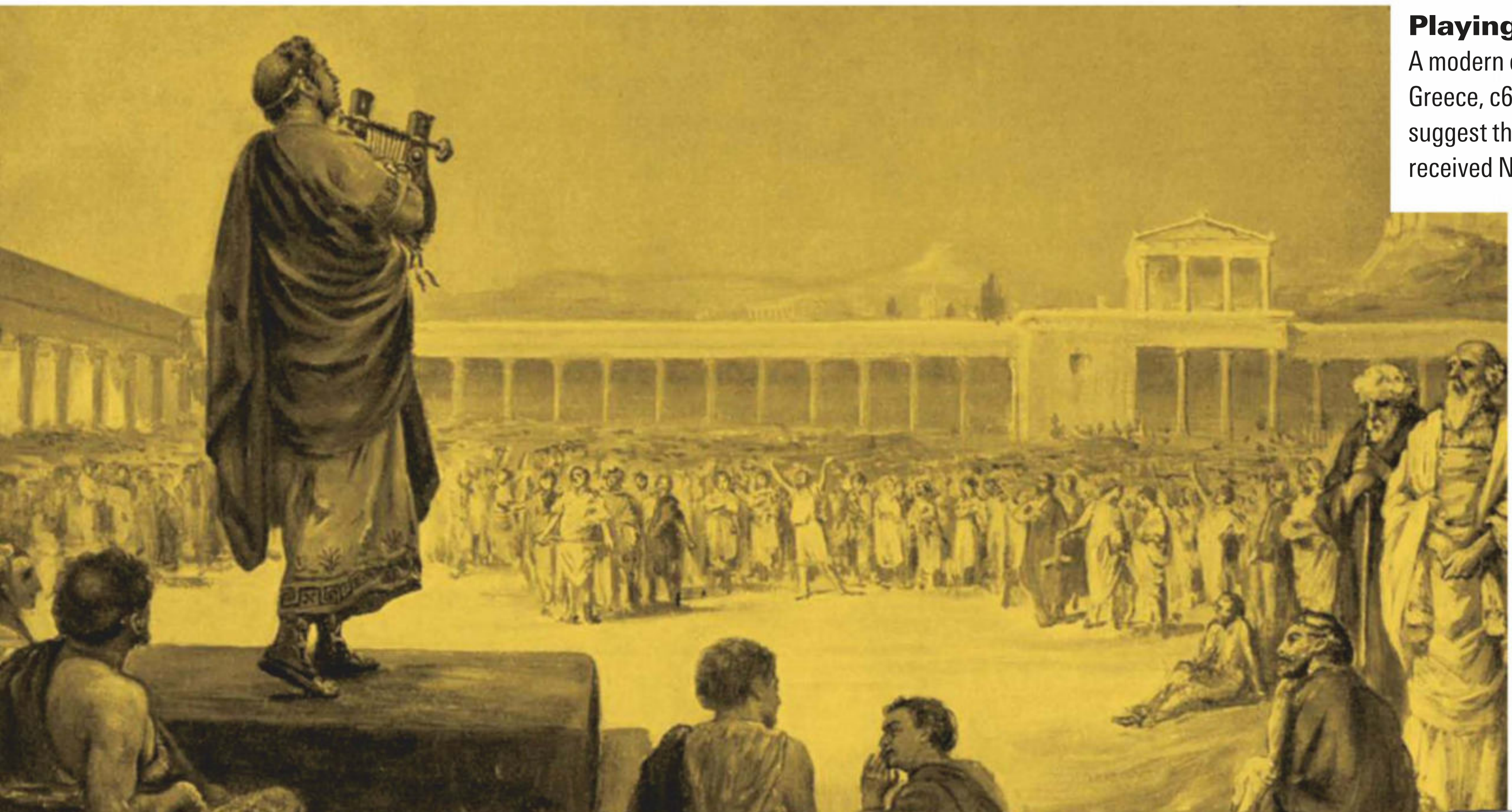
For and against

Tacitus, Suetonius and Dio all bring something different to our understanding of Nero. And, when viewed together, they are utterly damning. But we should also acknowledge that, in antiquity, they would have made up a mere fraction of the accounts of Nero's life available. In the late first century, after Nero's death, the Jewish historian Josephus told his readers that there were many different assessments of Nero's reign circulating at that time. Some were extremely complimentary about the emperor. Sadly, these have been lost, and the only histories still available to us are overwhelmingly hostile.

So if we are to accept the limitations of Roman histories of Nero, how else are we to paint an accurate picture of this most notorious of emperors? One tactic adopted by historians – especially in recent years – is to examine his actions in the context of his times. Were his 'crimes' typical of those committed by first-century emperors? Or was he an abominable outlier?

Take the much-derided Golden House. While its massive dimensions and eye-watering opulence have drawn criticism, Tiberius's villa at the coastal town of Sperlonga, Caligula's residence at the Horti

BRIDGEMAN/ALAMY/TOPFOTO



Playing to the audience
A modern depiction of Nero's tour in Greece, c66 AD. Inscriptions and statues suggest that at least some Greeks received Nero warmly

NERO CLAVD CAESAR AVG GER P M TR P IMP P P

Still valued
A coin bearing Nero's image. As late as the fifth century, his face adorned medallions distributed as souvenirs in Rome's Circus Maximus

Lamiani (atop Rome's Esquiline Hill), and Claudius's nymphaeum at Baiae (on the Gulf of Naples) were precursors to Nero's indulgence. It's true that Nero out-did his predecessors when building his palace in Rome – but outdoing his predecessors was exactly what a Roman emperor was meant to do.

If the Golden House was an extravagant folly, the allegation that Nero killed his wife Poppaea by kicking her while she was pregnant is far more shocking. Yet, once again, it is not anomalous. This episode conforms to an ancient literary convention used to describe tyrannical murders. The Achaemenid king Cambyses, Corinthian tyrant Periander and Greco-Roman senator Herodes Atticus were all accused of bringing about their wives' deaths with a kick to the belly. In short, we should not interpret the story of Poppaea's death in isolation – as a uniquely evil act committed by a uniquely evil emperor – but recognise it as one of the ways in which literature described the unexpected deaths of pregnant women.

Another factor to bear in mind when considering Nero's dire reputation, is that the Roman empire was enormous, and not all of its residents would have been influenced by the written sources. While Rome and parts of Italy were privy to the salacious gossip circulating around the cities, those further away encountered Nero primarily through coins, inscriptions and statues – and these often deliver a far more positive verdict.

One such can be found on the eastern side of the Parthenon in Athens. Carved into the stone of what is arguably antiquity's most celebrated monument is an inscription hailing Nero as the greatest imperator (general) and the son of a God (ie the deified Claudius). This is high praise indeed and was probably inspired by Rome's military gains in Armenia against the Parthians.

Later, in Boeotia (also Greece) a memorial was erected to commemorate Nero's tour of Achaea in AD 66–68, during which he declared that the province no longer had to pay taxes. The accompanying inscription declared that Nero was doing something for Greece that no other emperor had ever done; he is Zeus the Liberator and the New Apollo. While the people of Rome were obsessing over whom Nero was sleeping with and the grim details of his wife's death, those in Greece were more likely celebrating his military prowess and their tax breaks.

And if Nero was the ogre of the popular imagination, that fact had not reached the owner of a Neronian coin minted in Lugdunum (Lyon), which decorated a buried mirror box. Even though the box was interred after Nero's downfall, the coin was still considered beautiful and precious enough to accompany someone to their grave.

As late as the fifth century AD, the emperor's image was staring out from medallions given to people as souvenirs at the Circus Maximus in Rome. In fact, for a period, his image appeared more frequently than that of any other emperor.

What does all this tell us? The answer is that our traditional image of Nero doesn't necessarily represent the full picture. That, though the emperor undoubtedly committed terrible crimes, he was both loved and loathed. And that, while Tacitus, Suetonius and Dio viewed him as evil personified, many people appear to have thought quite the opposite. **H**

Dr Shushma Malik is a lecturer in classics at the University of Roehampton. Her book *The Nero Antichrist: Founding and Fashioning a Paradigm* was published by CUP in March

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You can listen to Melvyn Bragg and guests including Shushma Malik discuss **Nero** on an episode of BBC Radio 4's ***In Our Time*** at *bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0004cp7*

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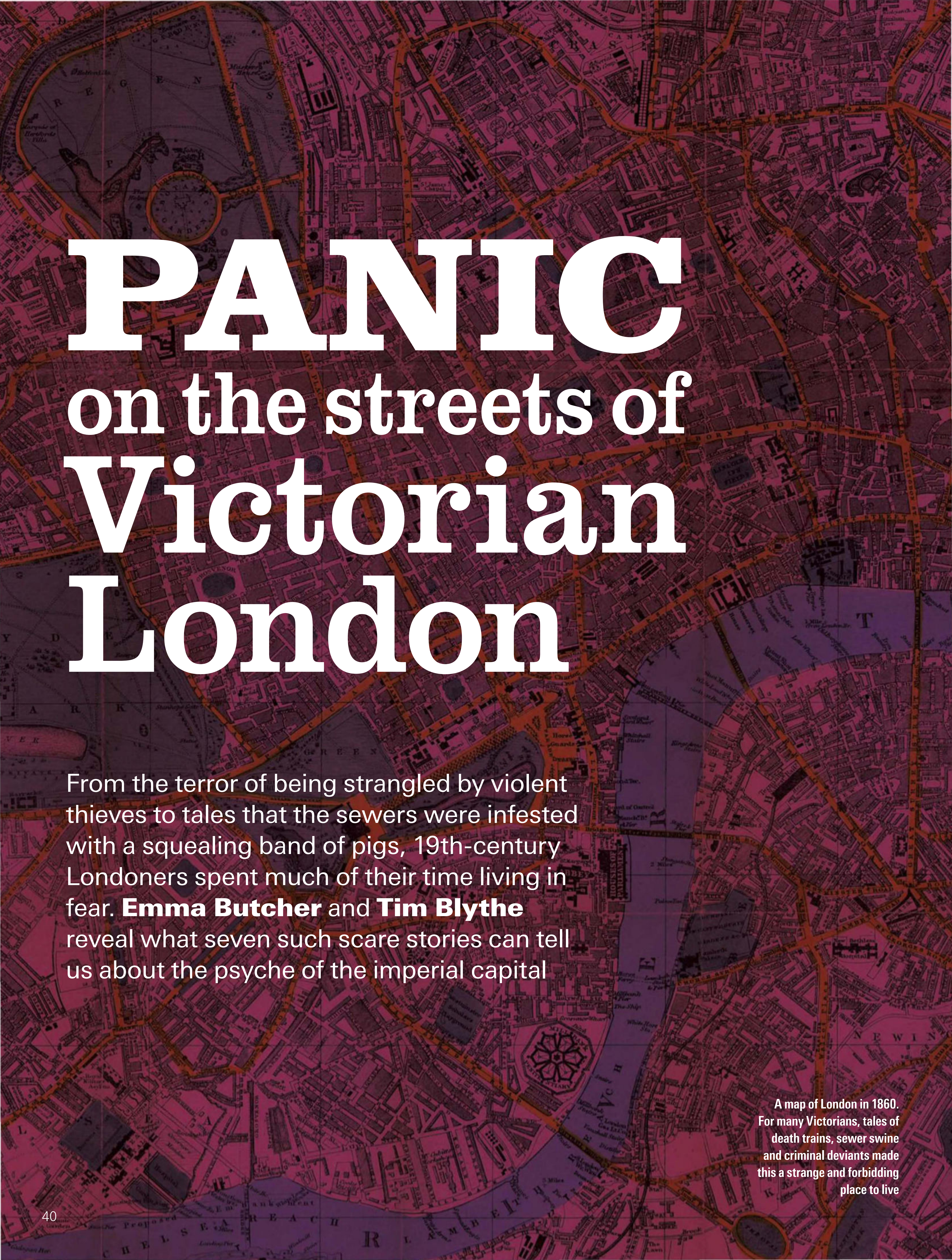
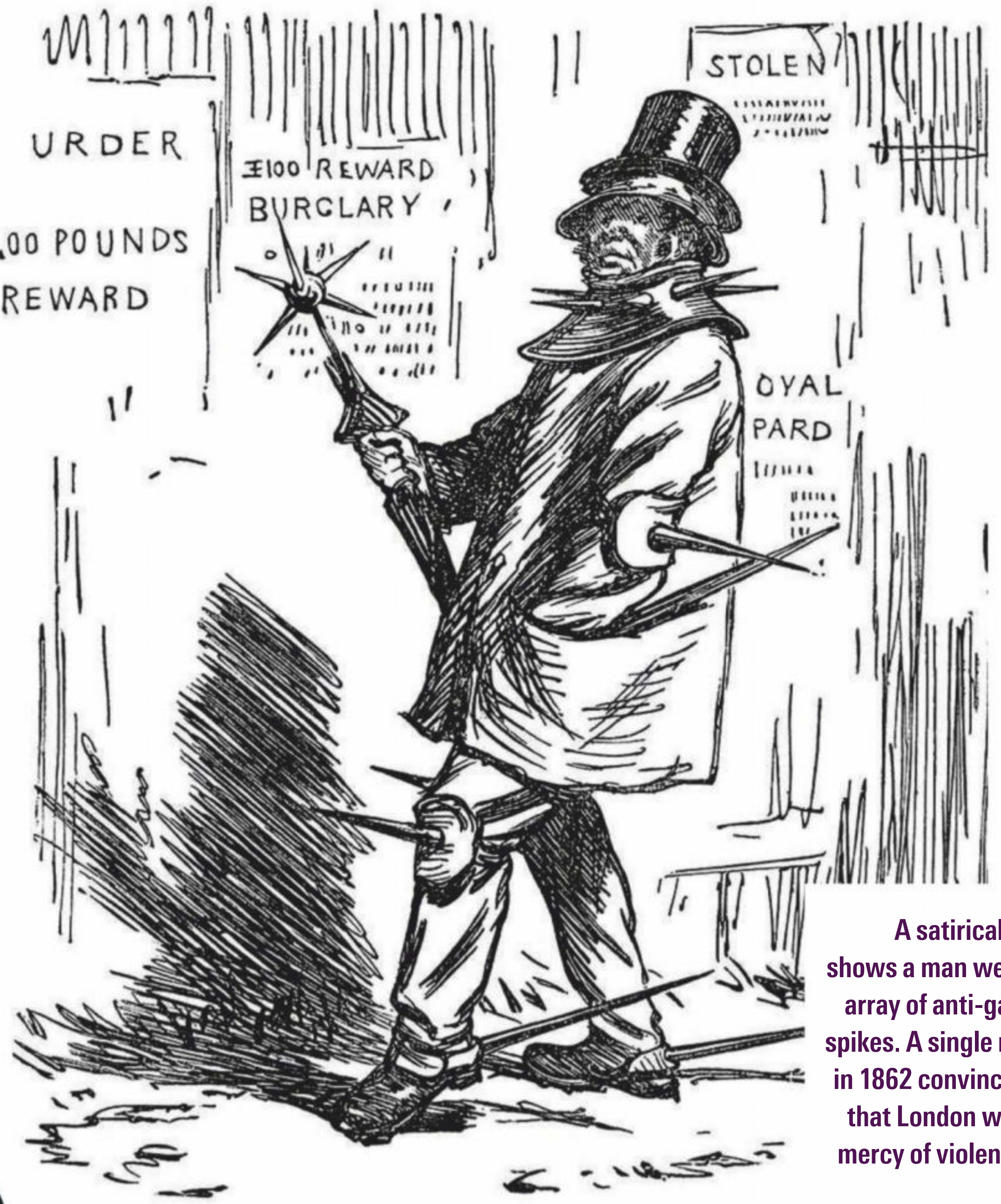
PANIC on the streets of Victorian London

From the terror of being strangled by violent thieves to tales that the sewers were infested with a squealing band of pigs, 19th-century Londoners spent much of their time living in fear. **Emma Butcher** and **Tim Blythe** reveal what seven such scare stories can tell us about the psyche of the imperial capital



A map of London in 1860. For many Victorians, tales of death trains, sewer swine and criminal deviants made this a strange and forbidding place to live



A satirical cartoon shows a man wearing an array of anti-garrotting spikes. A single mugging in 1862 convinced many that London was at the mercy of violent thieves

1 The garrotting panic of 1862

Victorian London was a sprawling metropolis, an imperial capital, the nerve-centre of the mightiest nation on Earth. Yet it was also a city wracked by fear. Confronted by rapid industrialisation, crowded slums and graphic media reports of a thriving criminal underbelly, many Londoners may have come to the conclusion that danger lurked in every shadow. And a single mugging in 1862 apparently confirmed their fears.

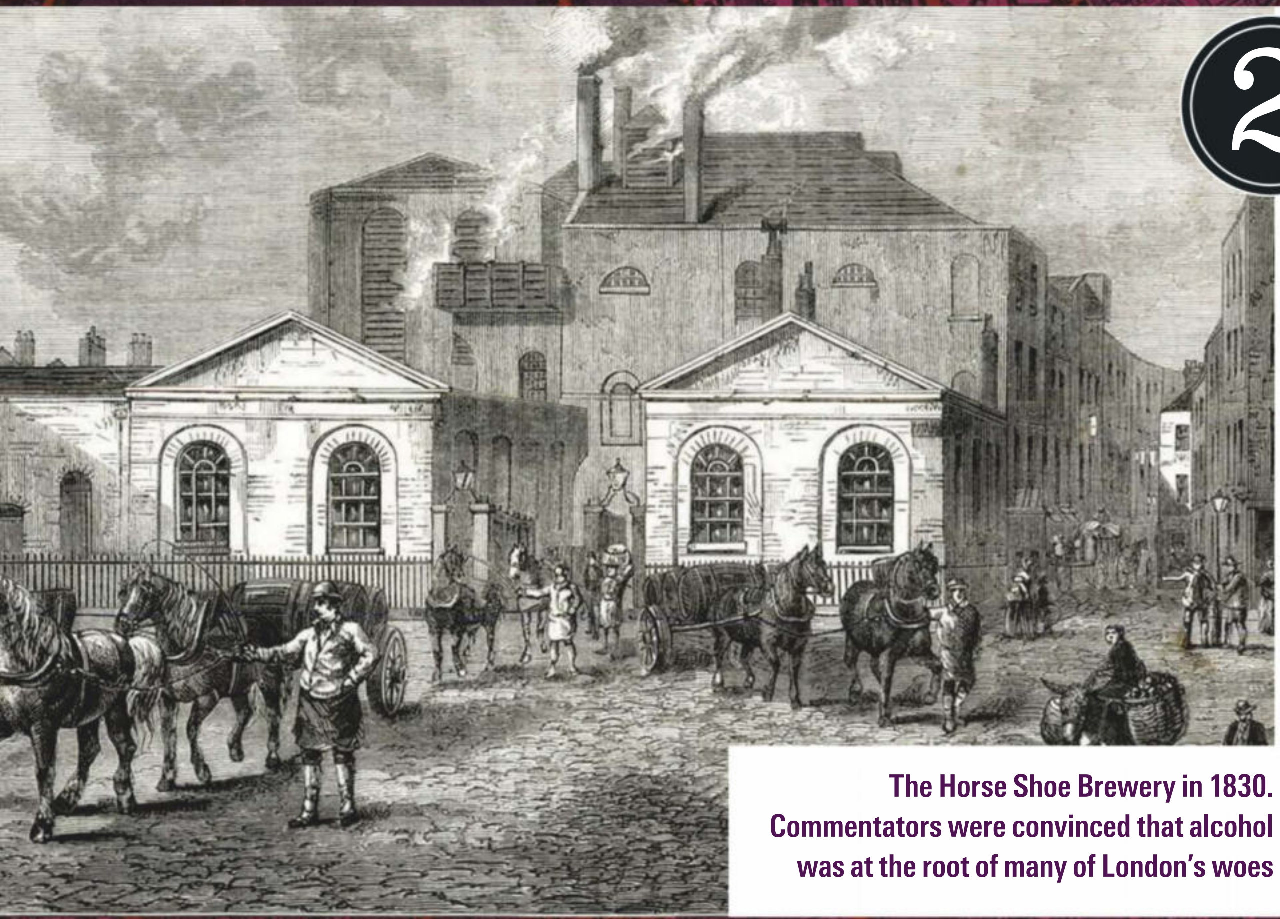
On 17 July, Hugh Pilkington, the Liberal MP for Blackburn, was walking home from a late sitting in the Commons when he was choked and robbed (he survived the attack). The press latched on to this incident and ramped up its coverage on street violence, despite no indication that criminal activity had increased. The public panicked, believing that criminals stalked the streets, searching for victims to strangle or 'garrotte'.

The media's sensationalism linked the mythical rise in violence to 'ticket-of-leave' men – convicted criminals who were granted conditional parole – and the recent reduction of criminals transported to Australia. To combat this threat, *Punch* produced a number of cartoons demonstrating how individuals could deal with the risk of garrotting, such as by walking back-to-back in pairs or by wearing protective clothing in the form of a collar studded with huge spikes (the first Metropolitan Police officers were given these collars as standard issue).

Press coverage also criticised the 'ineffective' police force and called for the redrafting of sympathetic prison reform proposals. The campaign was so pronounced that parliament rapidly drew-up and passed the Garrotters Act in 1863, which brought back floggings as a punishment for violent robbery. So, although the panic itself was short-lived, the change to prison reform, favouring deterrence over rehabilitation, ensured that harsh attitudes towards criminality endured. For, as *The Times* noted: "It is of far more moment to a Londoner that he should be able at all hours of the day or night to walk safely in the streets of London."

A spiked collar designed to ward off garrotters. Lurid press reports supercharged Londoners' paranoia about the safety of their streets

GETTY IMAGES/MARY EVANS/ TOPFOTO



The Horse Shoe Brewery in 1830. Commentators were convinced that alcohol was at the root of many of London's woes

2 The London beer flood

During the 19th century, alcohol was increasingly viewed as a perilous substance with the capacity to cause society to crumble. Events on 17 October 1814 did little to assuage these anxieties. Horse Shoe Brewery, located just off Tottenham Court Road, specialised in the making of porter. On the day in question, George Crick, a brewery employee, noticed a breakage in the enormous brewing vats, although he thought there was no imminent danger. Unbeknown to him, pressure was building within the damaged vat until it exploded with such power that it caused another nearby vat to burst too.

The result was a tidal wave of beer, supposedly 15 feet high and approaching 1 million litres in volume. This tsunami of porter crashed out of the brewery and into the surrounding slums of St Giles Rookery with such force that it destroyed walls and completely flooded basements, dashing people "to pieces". A passing American tourist wrote:

3 The pig-faced woman of Manchester Square

In summer 1815, the night-skies of London were lit up to celebrate Britain's victory at the battle of Waterloo. But not all eyes were on the bright lights. A magnificently dressed woman was seen sitting in a carriage driving about the sights, but on closer inspection, observers were shocked to see that she had the face of a pig.

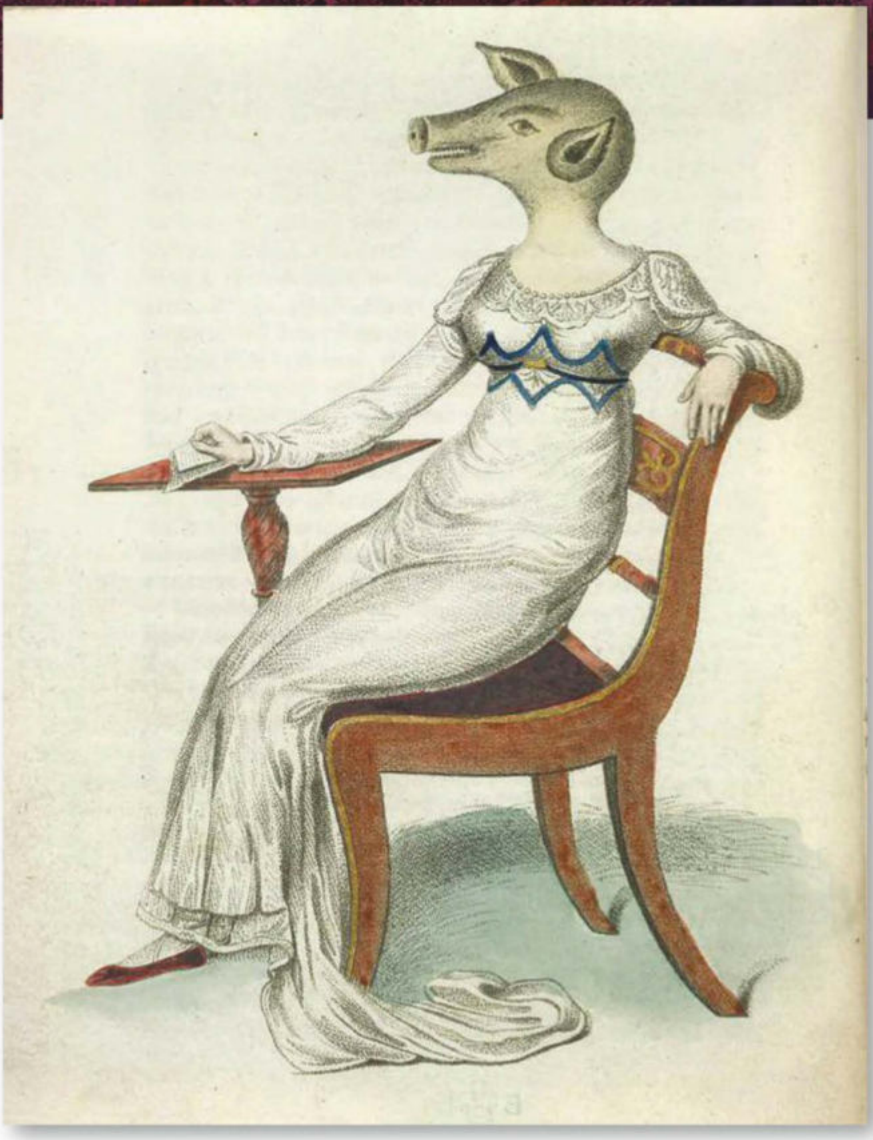
Previously, a rumour had swept London that a pig-faced noblewoman lived in Marylebone, who ate from a silver trough, and when spoken to, replied only in grunts. Although the woman was reported to be "most delicately formed, and of the greatest symmetry", atop her neck sat a "hideous face". Her blend of beauty and beast inspired various artists, such as the famed caricaturist George Cruikshank, who drew her playing piano in an alluring white dress, with a transparent veil covering her snout.

The media suggested that the pig-faced woman had come to London in order to find a husband, and some suitors went as far to write into the papers to appeal to her: "A SINGLE GENTLEMAN…," wrote one, "is desirous of explaining his Mind to the Friends of a Person who has a Misfortune in her Face. His intentions are sincere."

Other suitors called on her in person, only to find she was far from wife material. One baronet was reported to have called upon the "great lady", only to recoil from her with shouts of horror as she attacked his neck, causing an injury that required treatment by a surgeon.

Theories on the origins of such stories vary. It's been suggested that they were inspired by a real-life woman with a facial disfigurement, or, alternatively, that they were based on a mythological history of pig-faced women dating back to the 1600s.

Either way – presented as violent, repulsive and sexual in equal parts – the pig-faced woman posed a threat to traditional gender roles. She showed that women did not necessarily fit into Victorian ideals of beauty, and could instead be enigmatic, other-worldly and ultimately dangerous.



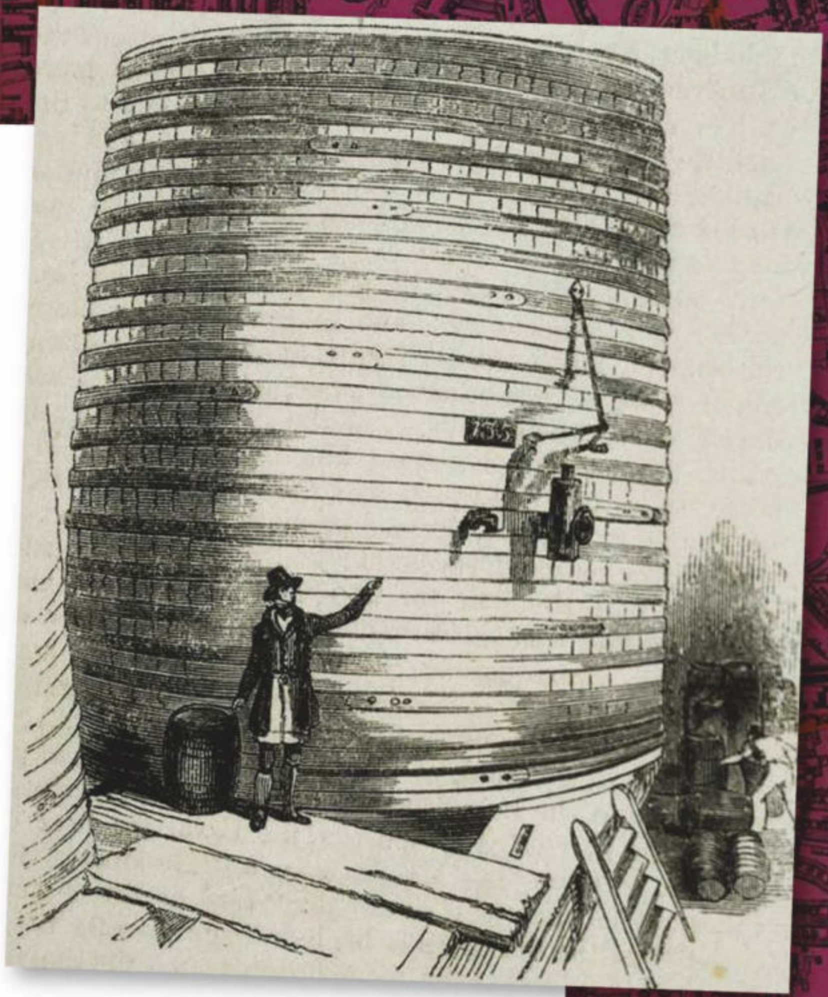
A contemporary portrait of the pig-faced woman, who embodied fears that women could be "enigmatic, other-worldly and ultimately dangerous"

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

"Whole dwellings were literally riddled by flood; numbers were killed… in every direction came the groans of sufferers."

In total, eight people, all working-class women and children, lost their lives. Soon after, labourers were assigned the "distressing task" of clearing the fallout, working in the midst of "offensive and over-powering" beer fumes. Rumours were soon doing the rounds that a number died from alcohol poisoning after gleefully drinking from the sea of beer that covered the streets. However, newspaper articles actually report the opposite, referencing the "caution and humanity" of locals in rescuing victims and paying their respect to those who died.

Regardless, the incident served as a reminder to London's self-appointed moral guardians that alcohol posed a threat to the poor. The *Morning Post* even compared breweries to "magazines for gun-powder". The message was clear: it was not only dangerous to drink beer, but also to produce it in the first place.



This illustration from 1841 shows the sheer size of brewers' vats. Eight people died when a vat at London's Horse Shoe Brewery exploded in 1814

4

The train for the dead

In the winter of 1854, a new railway line opened in London. The *Illustrated London News* was full of praise, writing joyfully of people leaving the dense city to "reach the open country with the speed of the winds".

There was just one difference about these country-bound travellers: many of them were dead. London's Necropolis Railways was built in response to the crisis of overcrowding in the capital. Graveyards were stretched to their limits; sewers and chapels were broken into to dump bodies; and the ongoing cholera epidemic of the 1840s and 50s led to thousands of bodies awaiting disposal.

Enter Richard Broun and Richard Sprye, entrepreneurs who proposed a solution: to transport bodies and mourners to Brookwood Cemetery near Woking in Surrey, which was the largest cemetery in the world and affectionately named 'the city of the dead'.

Despite his good intentions, Broun made an unfortunate blip in advertising. In stating his belief that all deceased should lie "in one vast heap… mingled together", he triggered a very English panic – one that reveals a great deal about Victorian anxieties over class. Respectable, middle and upper-class Londoners believed fervently that they should be separated from the 'great unwashed' even in death. The bishop of London, Charles Blomfield, violently opposed "persons of opposite character carried in the same conveyance". The idea of a respected church member being carried alongside a profligate would "shock the feelings of his friends".

Soon, the carriages had been divided according to social rank, as was 'Cemetery Station' in London, with the third-class waiting room on the bottom floor, and then second and first-class receptions, accessed by a grand staircase.

Despite these problems, the railway was so successful that it ran until the Second World War, carrying more than 200,000 Londoners to their final resting place through a portal between the living and the dead.

A funeral train steams towards Brookwood Cemetery – final resting place for 200,000 Londoners – in 1902

MARY EVANS

The doorway to 50 Berkeley Square, which was widely believed to be the most haunted house in London

5

Haunted to death at Berkeley Square

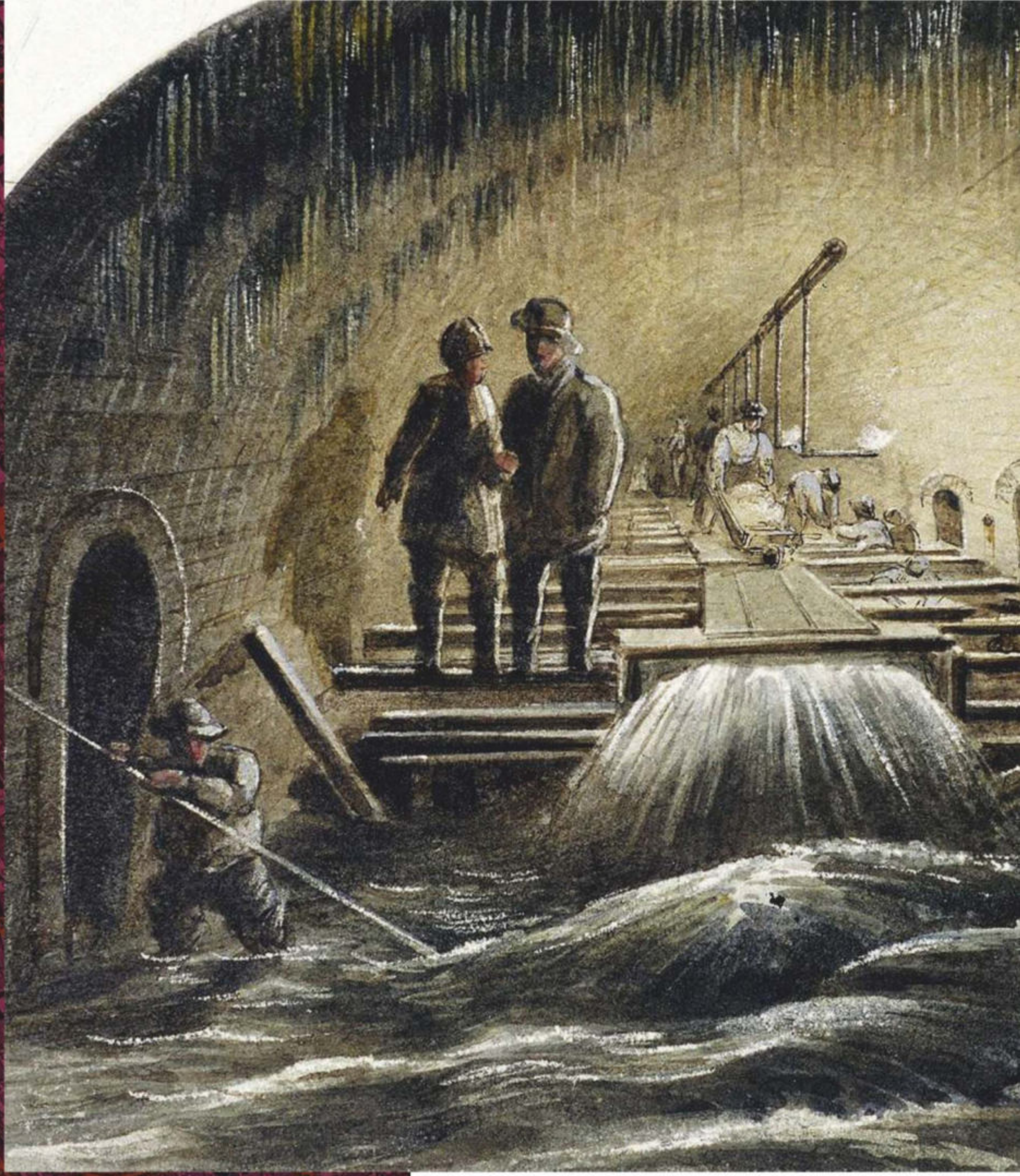
"The cobwebs in the windows lie, And dirt and dust are there; What is the unknown history, Of 50, Berkeley square?"

These words, written by the Victorian poet Frederick Doveton, reflect the unease and mystery surrounding a run-down townhouse in the affluent London district of Mayfair. In the late 19th century, it gained a reputation as being the most haunted house in London, with people driven mad at the sight of a horrible apparition in an attic room.

Soon, 50 Berkeley Square's evil aura was the talk of dinner parties, and manna from heaven for the press. In 1879, *The Mayfair Magazine* reported that a Lord Lyttelton had shot at something through the darkness, which left no trace but the bullet holes in the floorboards. The periodical *Notes and Queries* published a letter that wrote of a maid, who was found, "lying at the foot of the bed in strong convulsions". She was hospitalised with insanity and died the following morning.

The most common rumour was that 50 Berkeley Square was occupied by a Mr Myers, who had been jilted at the altar and now wandered the house in a state of lunacy. Another was that the house belonged to a Mr Du Pré, who "shut up his lunatic brother there in a cage in one of the attics… the poor captive was so violent that he could only be fed through a hole".

Regardless of the truth, the house's dilapidated and enigmatic state allowed it to embody contemporary anxieties that ranged from the rising interest in spiritualism and the occult, to the mannerisms and treatment of mentally ill people. It was not merely the subject of a fireside story, but an embodiment of the dark side of Victorian high-class society.



6

The sewer swine of Hampstead

Most people have heard the myth that alligators roam the sewers of New York. But did you know that London's underground waterways were rumoured to be infested with a squealing band of sewer pigs? In the mid-19th century, increasing urbanisation meant that London's sewer system was breaching its limits, the streets overrunning with human filth.

Nobody knew the extent of these unsanitary conditions better than the 'toshers', who sifted through sewer matter for treasure. In his book *London Labour and the London Poor*, the journalist Henry Mayhew interviewed these sewage sifters along with other characters of the Victorian underworld, revealing

Rumours swirled that swine, like the one pictured below, ran riot under Londoners' feet

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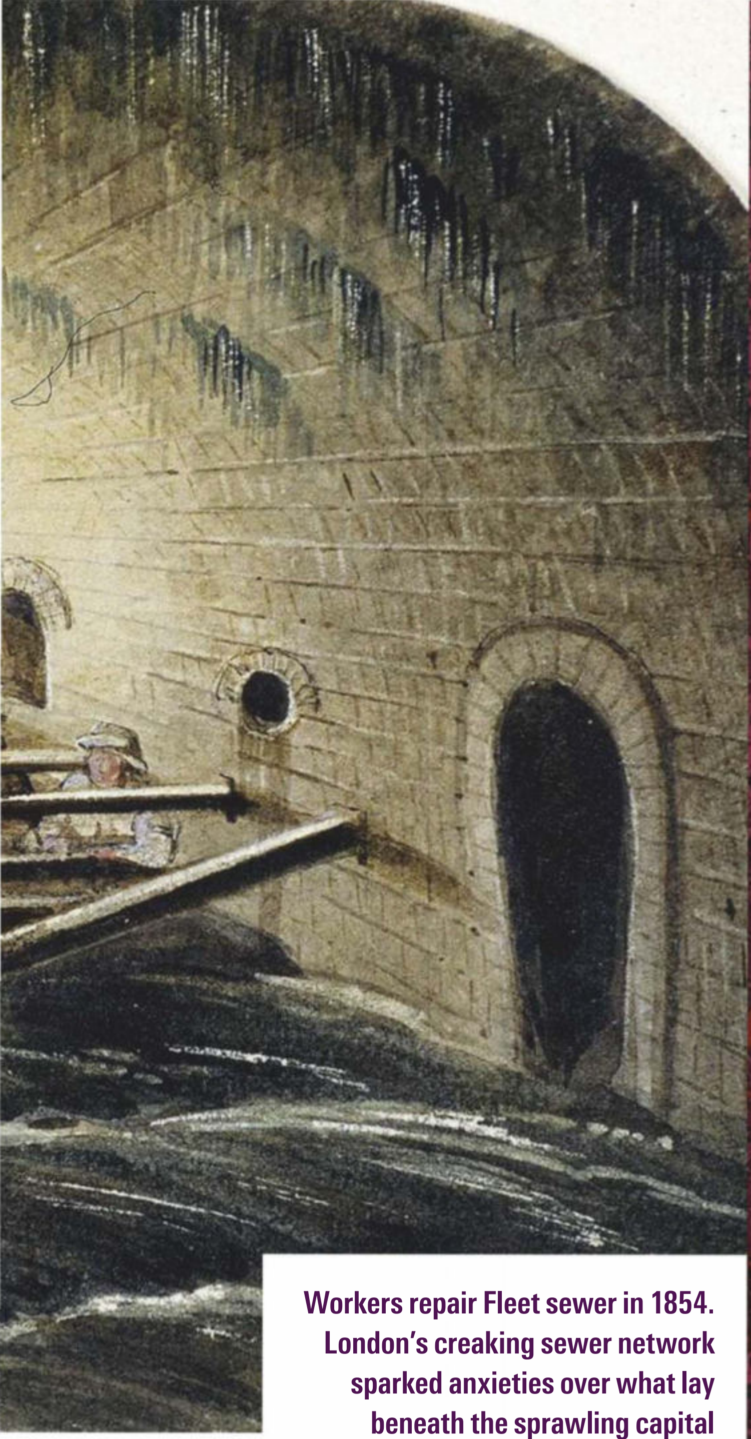


Workers repair Fleet sewer in 1854. London's creaking sewer network sparked anxieties over what lay beneath the sprawling capital

the city's dark and disturbing secrets: "There is a strange tale in existence among the shore-workers, of a race of wild hogs inhabiting the sewers in the neighbourhood of Hampstead. The story runs, that a sow… littered and reared her offspring in the drain… this breed multiplied exceedingly, and have become almost as ferocious as they are numerous."

The image of an army of stinking swine haunting the underground tunnels captured the imagination of the media and the public, highlighting the uncontrollable vastness of an ever-growing London, and the types of beasts that feed on urban waste. In 1859, *The Daily Telegraph* reported: "London is an amalgam of worlds within worlds… and the ignorance of its penetralia [hidden spaces] common to us who dwell therein. It has been said that Hampstead sewers shelter a monstrous breed of black swine… whose ferocious snouts will one day up-root Highgate archway."

At the end of the 1850s, London sewers were overhauled and the story of the black sewer swine became nothing but an urban legend. But the fact that it had such an impact on popular culture demonstrates the anxieties all classes felt over London's infrastructure and the enduring fears of what monsters lurk beneath cities' subterranean spaces.

7

Spring-Heeled Jack's reign of terror

Victorian London is known for blurring the line between man and myth. The same streets that bore legendary and real-life monsters, such as Sweeney Todd and Jack the Ripper, were also home to one who straddled both fact and fiction: Spring-Heeled Jack. He may be little remembered now, but Jack haunted Londoners' dreams for almost a century.

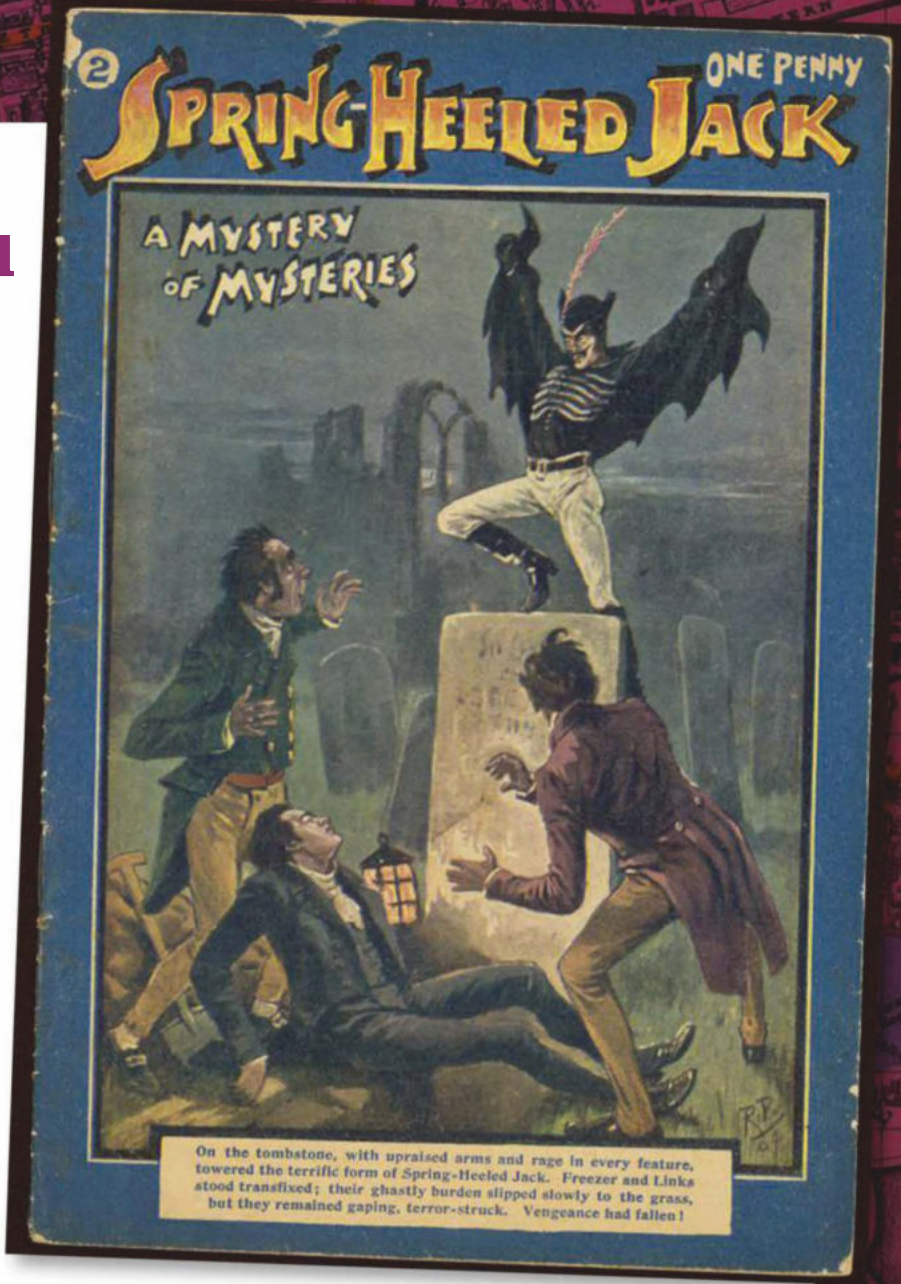
Descriptions of Jack are inconsistent, but his appearance is frequently portrayed as devil-like, and he was apparently able to leap over walls, fences and, in some cases, small buildings. Characteristically, he was known for ambushing pedestrians, ranging from lone wanderers to mail coachmen.

Although Jack did attack men, the assaults that attracted most attention were those on women, which often involved him clawing at their bodies, scaring them into fits. In some cases, he attacked them while vomiting blue and white flames.

In the 1830s, Jack's escapades were brought to the attention of the Lord Mayor of London, Sir John Cowan, by an anonymous letter, which blamed some individuals of "higher-rank" who had taken part in a reckless wager. Although sceptical at first, *The Times*' follow-on report led to south Londoners coming forward with similar stories, and, eventually, new crimes were attributed to him in all four corners of the United Kingdom.

On the one hand, Jack was a terrifying symbol of criminal and sexual degeneracy; on the other he was a prankster and 'bogeyman', used to frighten children into behaving. He became a recurrent character in several penny dreadfuls (one-penny fiction) and even replaced the devil in Punch and Judy shows.

By the 1900s, Jack had lost the spring in his step, described by *The Idler* as "gaunt and weird, with a tangled beard". Yet his persistent presence throughout the Victorian era shows how the anxieties of the age rippled through layers of reality and imprinted themselves on the macabre and the bizarre. **H**

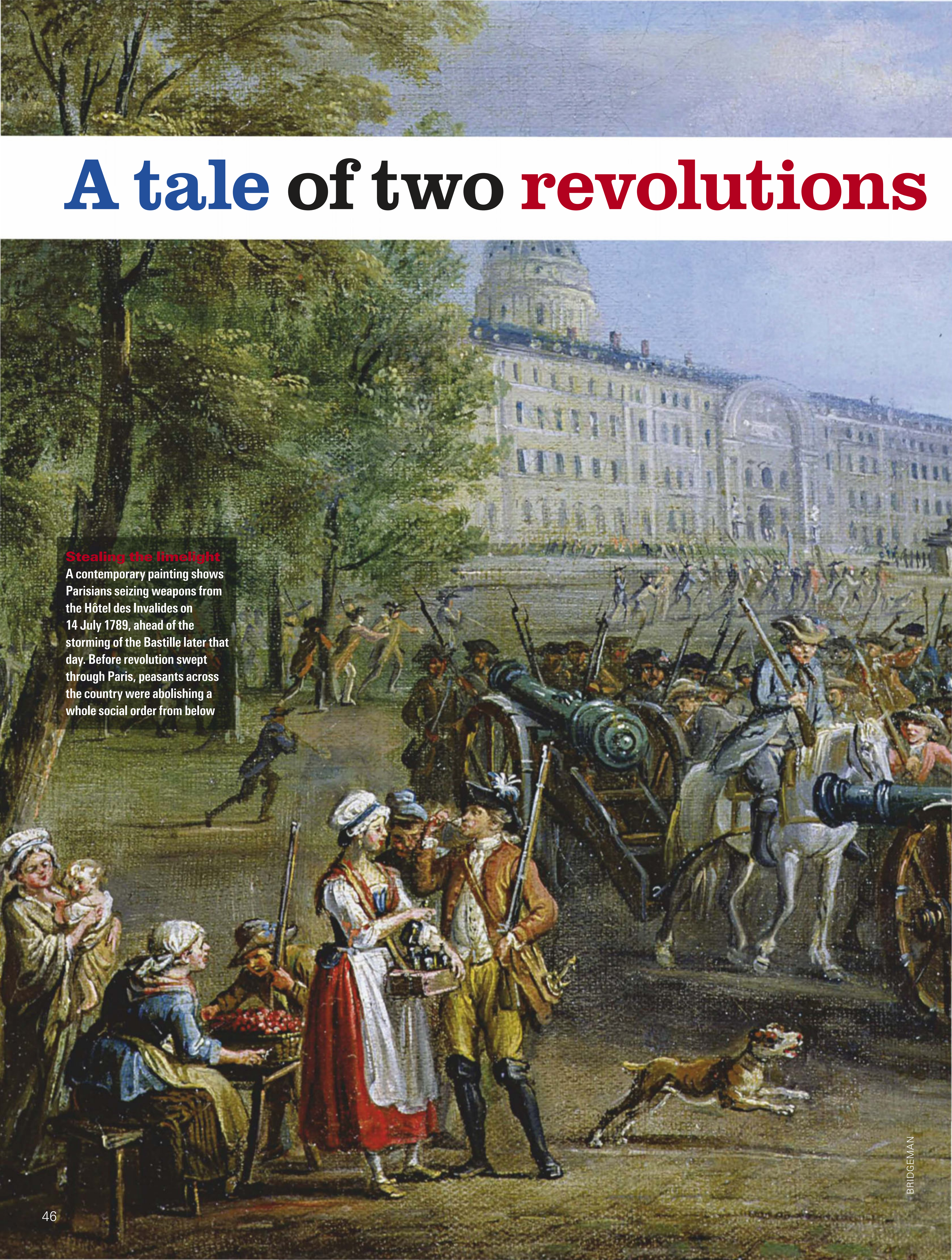


On the tombstone, with upraised arms and rage in every feature, towered the terrific form of Spring-Heeled Jack. Freezer and Links stood transfixed; their ghastly burden slipped slowly to the grass, but they remained gaping, terror-struck. Vengeance had fallen!

Spring-Heeled Jack towers over victims in a penny dreadful. This mythical bogeyman was best known for ambushing lone women

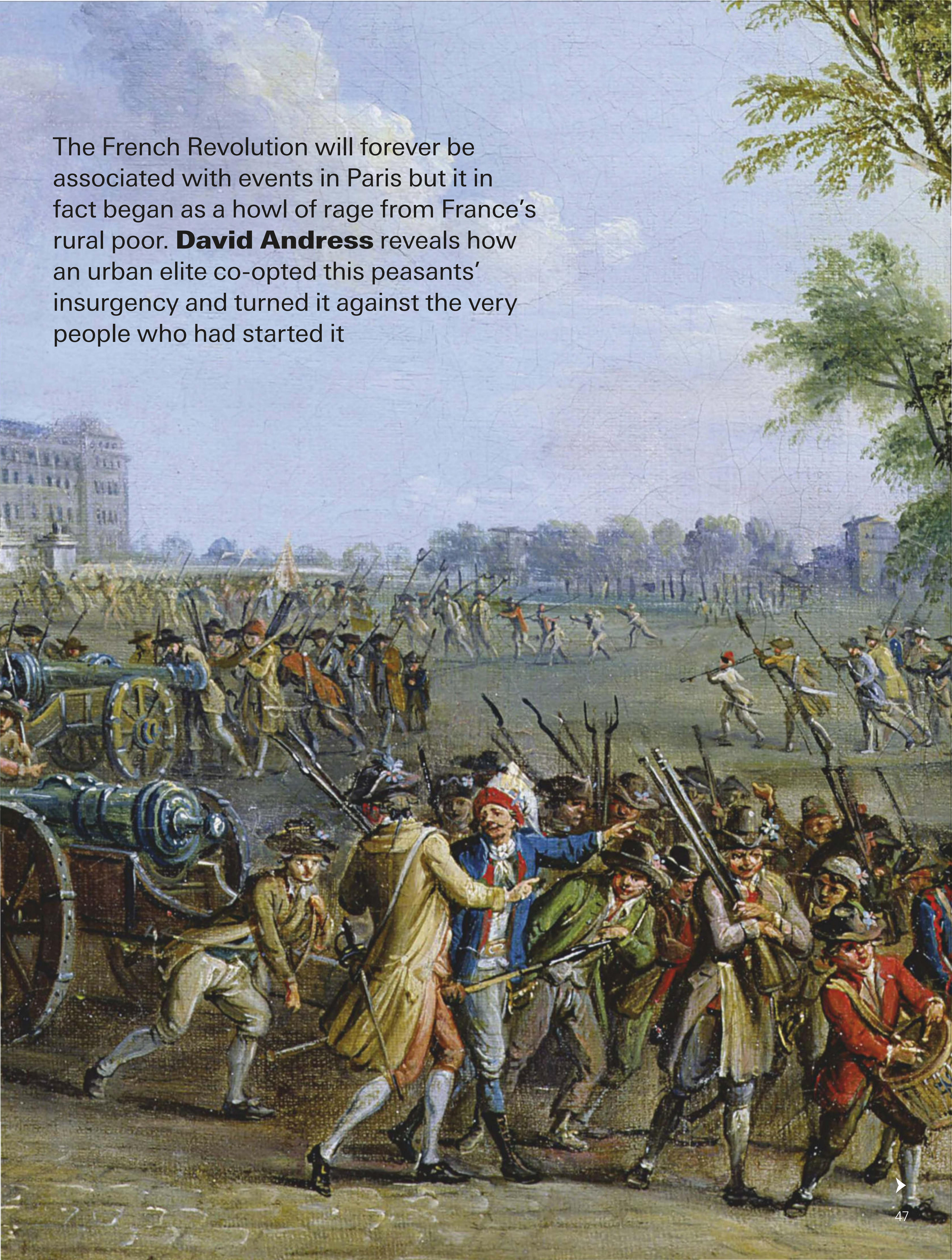
Emma Butcher specialises in Romantic and Victorian literature and culture at the University of Leicester. Her books include *The Brontës and War* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019). **Timothy Blythe** is a freelance historian based in the south Shropshire hills

A tale of two revolutions



Stealing the limelight
A contemporary painting shows Parisians seizing weapons from the Hôtel des Invalides on 14 July 1789, ahead of the storming of the Bastille later that day. Before revolution swept through Paris, peasants across the country were abolishing a whole social order from below

BRIDGEMAN



The French Revolution will forever be associated with events in Paris but it in fact began as a howl of rage from France's rural poor. **David Andress** reveals how an urban elite co-opted this peasants' insurgency and turned it against the very people who had started it

The peasants of Avançon had had enough. And so they rebelled. It was April 1789: several months earlier, their village, nestled in an alpine valley near the regional centre of Gap, had like every other French village been summoned to express their collective grievances. For the first time since 1614, an elected national body, an Estates-General, had been summoned by royal decree, with notice that what the people wrote in their *cahiers de doléances*, their registers of grievances, would reach King Louis XVI's ears for redress.

The offer came in a moment of deep crisis. At the top of society, there was deadlock about reforms to taxation vital to stave off state bankruptcy. This was why, after two years of manoeuvring, the kingdom had blown the dust off the remedy of an Estates-General, empowered to make changes nobody else could agree on. But the crisis at the bottom of society was even deeper. Months of snowbound winter had battened on a country fearful of how to cope with the latest of several poor harvests. Intensifying shortages and rising prices in the spring fed rumours that the rich and powerful were plotting to starve the people into submission.

So the people acted. The peasants of Avançon launched their own local revolution. Their feudal seigneur, the overlord entitled to a share of all they produced, was a nobleman and judge in the regional court at Aix. Early in April, they wrote informing him that the statement of their grievances to the Estates-General had ended their obligations to him. On Sunday 19 April, they met after church and determined to get back the crops they had handed over from the last harvest. The next day, joined by detachments from neighbouring villages, they marched under arms to the lord's chateau. He was absent, so they conducted a forcible but peaceful search, finding nothing helpful, and left after obliging the servants to promise that the lord would formally renounce his rights within the week.

The forces of order responded. A mounted police detachment was met with defiance from the community, and a threat to drive their cattle onto the lord's pasture. A larger body of cavalry was despatched days later, but the villagers hid on the steep wooded hillsides until they departed. Overt confrontation fizzled out into bluster about legal action, but the seigneur wrote to the government lamenting that his authority, and ability to extract revenue from the village, was now a dead letter. His account is the only record we have of this event, which would otherwise be buried in obscurity.

The revolutionaries who took power in Paris betrayed the hopes of the masses, laying the path to violence

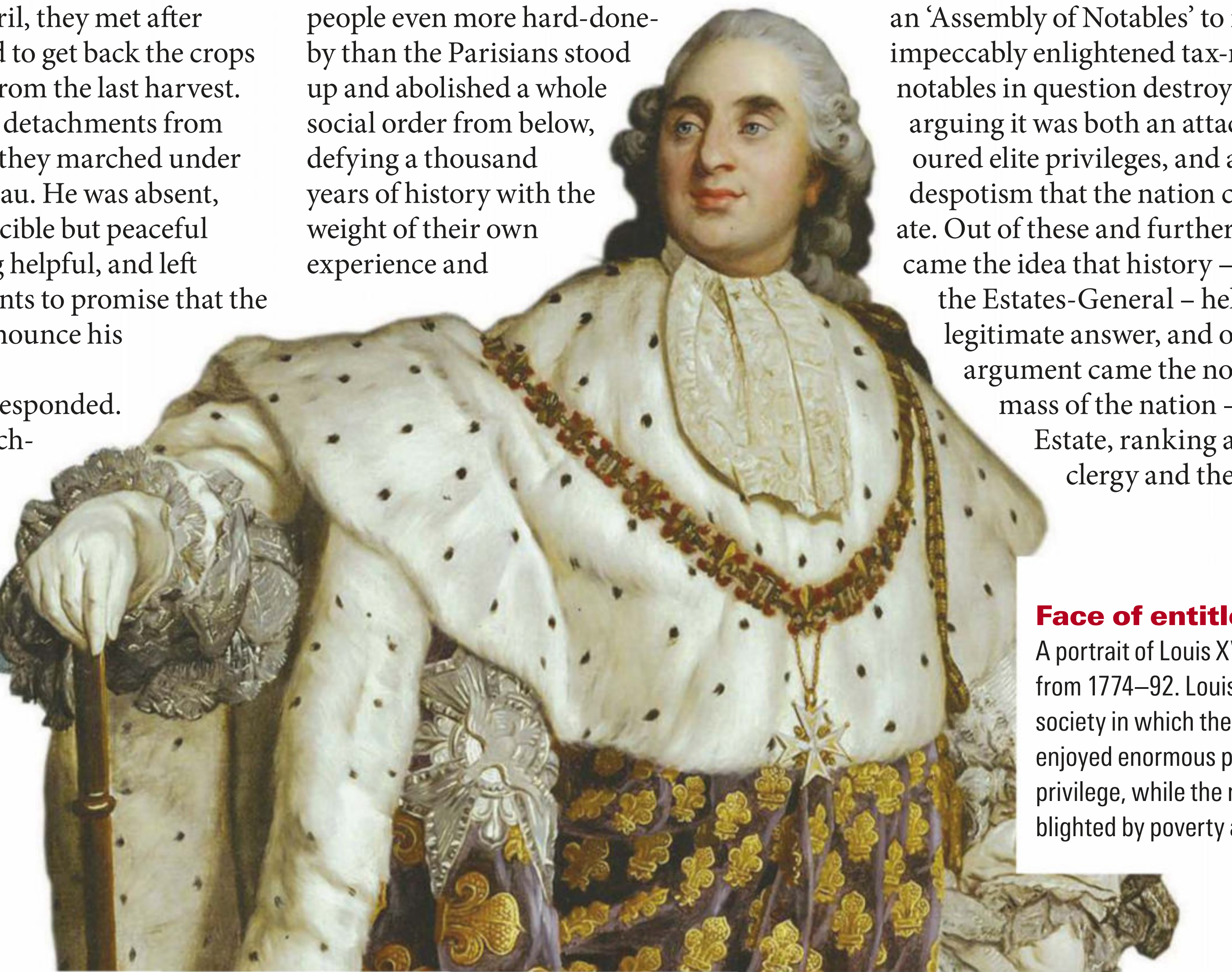
The path to violence

The French Revolution of 1789 is most often depicted in terms of the dramatic and traumatic events at the national centre, and of course those killed and injured storming the Bastille on 14 July deserve such attention. But the revolution was also made in thousands of other places, where people even more hard-done-by than the Parisians stood up and abolished a whole social order from below, defying a thousand years of history with the weight of their own experience and their hopes for a better future. All too often, those who took power in the name of the revolution betrayed those hopes, and in that betrayal laid the path to the tragic violence for which the 1790s are also renowned.

The crisis that became the French Revolution began at the very highest levels of a highly hierarchical society. If the kingdom under King Louis XV (reigned 1715–74) had not sought to exert itself vigorously in both global imperial competition and martial dynastic rivalry, it would not have spent more than half the period 1735–65 at war, and it would certainly not have piled up the mountain of debt such wars created. If the culture that sought glory on the battlefield and at the negotiating-table had been less aristocratic, less driven by assumptions about the entitlement of the great to privilege (and thus to avoid paying their fair share), those debts might have been less unmanageable, and the taxation system more easily reformable.

By the 1780s, after another expensive war, this time for American liberty, under the new young king Louis XVI (1774–92), reformist currents of 'Enlightenment' thinking insisted that something would have to give. By 1786, a threat of real state bankruptcy made that a certainty. The trouble with Enlightenment by then was that almost everyone with an opinion thought it was on their side. After decades of polite society debate, and rising circulation of sometimes less-polite written critique, it had become commonplace for ministerial reformers and reactionary stalwarts alike to claim that the "national interest" and "public opinion" supported their positions.

When ministers in early 1787 handpicked an 'Assembly of Notables' to rubber-stamp impeccably enlightened tax-reforms, the notables in question destroyed the project by arguing it was both an attack on time-honoured elite privileges, and a lurch towards despotism that the nation could not tolerate. Out of these and further elite disputes came the idea that history – in the form of the Estates-General – held the only legitimate answer, and out of yet more argument came the notion that the mass of the nation – the Third Estate, ranking after the Catholic clergy and the nobility –



Face of entitlement

A portrait of Louis XVI, king of France from 1774–92. Louis stood atop a society in which the nobility and clergy enjoyed enormous power and privilege, while the masses lived lives blighted by poverty and disease

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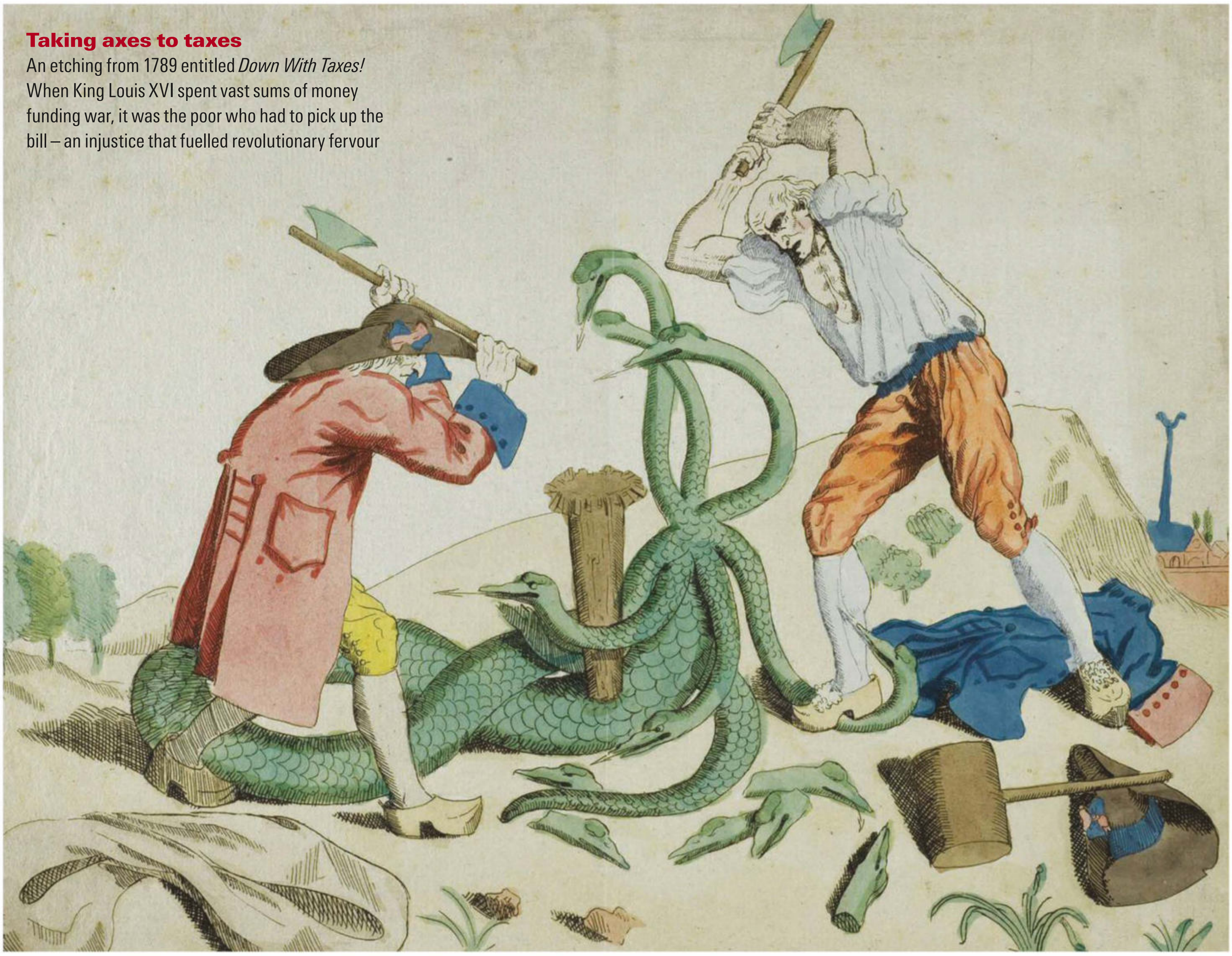
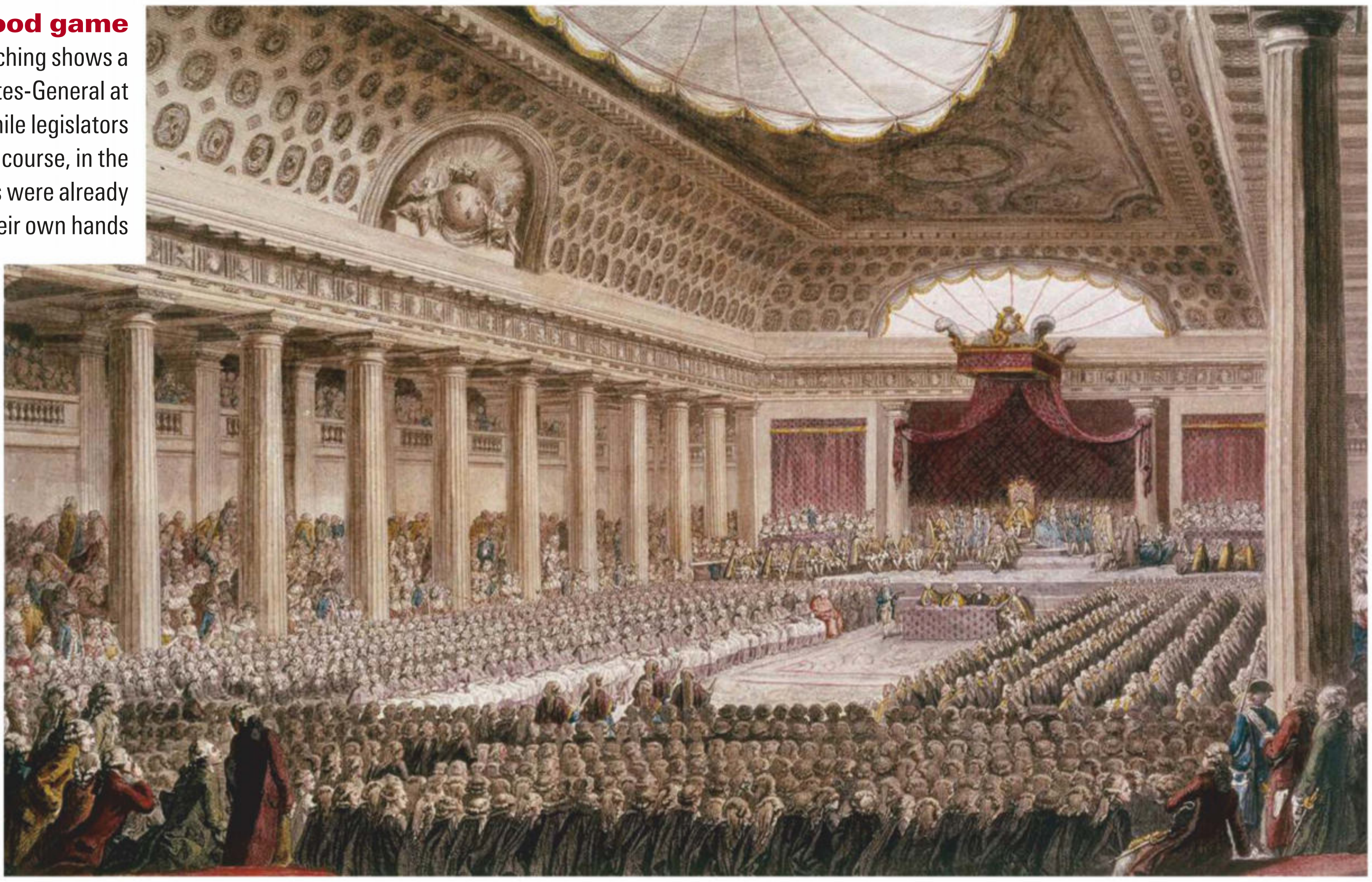


Taking axes to taxes

An etching from 1789 entitled *Down With Taxes!* When King Louis XVI spent vast sums of money funding war, it was the poor who had to pick up the bill – an injustice that fuelled revolutionary fervour

Talking a good game

A contemporary etching shows a meeting of the Estates-General at Versailles, 1789. While legislators discussed France's future course, in the countryside peasants were already taking matters into their own hands



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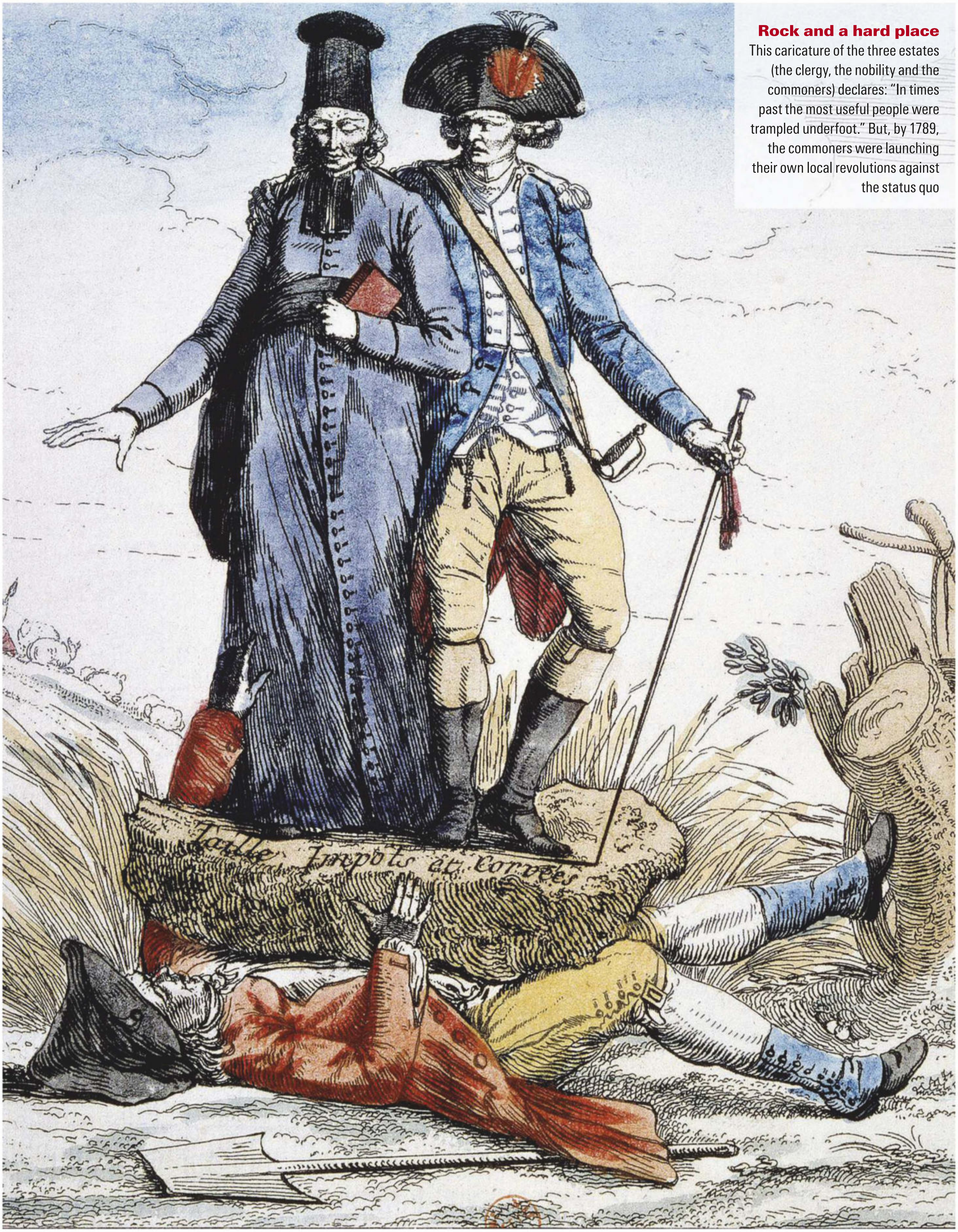

Rock and a hard place

This caricature of the three estates (the clergy, the nobility and the commoners) declares: “In times past the most useful people were trampled underfoot.” But, by 1789, the commoners were launching their own local revolutions against the status quo

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deserved an enhanced voice in proceedings. By the end of 1788, the whole of France was preparing for the mammoth task of making real an idea that had seemed fantastic when voiced only 18 months earlier, of a "truly national representation".

But what, in fact, was the nation to be thus represented? It was some 28 million people, of whom perhaps less than 1 per cent were the First Estate of Catholic clergy, monks and nuns, and perhaps around the same number were the Second Estate of those with formal title to nobility.

Of the remaining 98 per cent, some hundreds of thousands constituted a wider propertied class, the comfortably-off and the upwardly mobile who had not yet managed to do what remained entirely normal, and progress formally into the ranks of the nobility. Some of them were a genuinely influential mercantile class, making fortunes from the great iniquities of the trade in slaves and the colonial produce they toiled for, but even these tended to do what generations of lesser merchants, lawyers and traders had done, and look to lordship as their personal and familial future. It was out of the more radical-minded of all these elites that a new revolutionary leadership would be forged.

Beneath these groups, and beneath the several million others who dwelled in towns and cities, were the three-quarters or more of the French who lived in the countryside. Alongside rural craftspeople and the spinners and weavers of cottage industry, at least two-thirds of the French were peasants, engaged directly in agriculture. They owned a little under half the land of the country, though often in feeble plots.

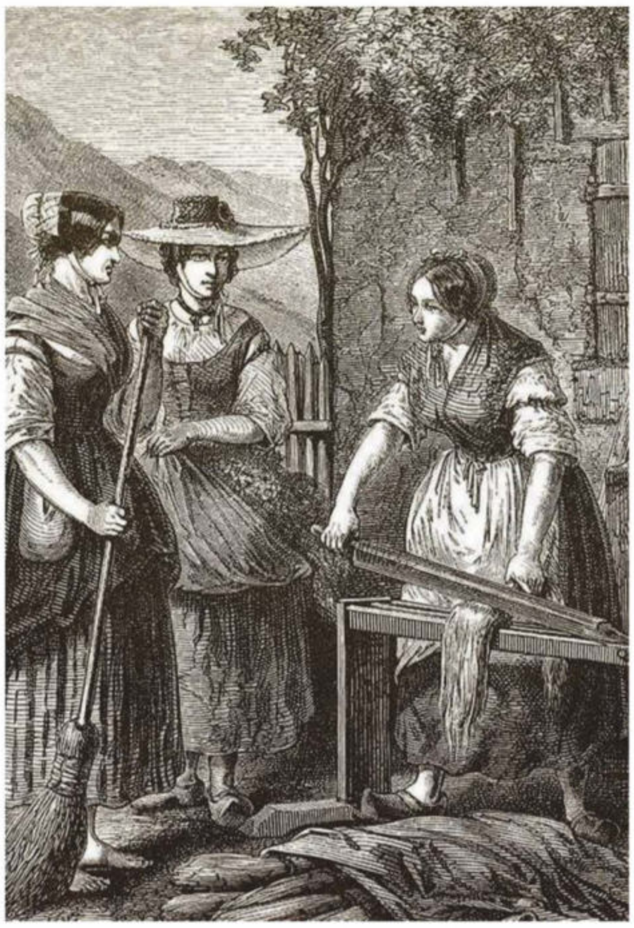
Kaleidoscope of hardships

The more prosperous peasants rented the other half from wealthy landowners. The less prosperous hired themselves out, the menfolk as day-labourers, the women sometimes likewise, or as servants and wet-nurses. Almost all of them sent their children into domestic or agricultural service as soon as they could support themselves.

The actual conditions of life for the peasantry were a kaleidoscope of hardships, makeshifts, historic rights and entitlements, overlain with grim realities of high child mortality – a third, even a half in some places – and periodic epidemic disease.

In this context, families and communities were sometimes remarkably successful. Two or three generations of good luck could move a single family from the land, via education and trade, to the fringes of real prosperity. The generations preceding 1789, although now lurching into a crisis of prices, had collectively fed a population that grew by nearly a quarter in a few decades – impossible without constant effort at innovation and expansion, new crops and new techniques.

Peasants were faced with the grim realities of high child mortality rates – a half in some places – and epidemic disease



ALAMY

Hard labour
Women process flax in the eastern region of Vosges. Some peasant families moved rapidly up the social ladder but, for many, life was defined by rising prices and chronic food shortages

In the *cahiers de doléances* they wrote in 1789, peasant communities expressed the struggle they experienced to deliver this growth – and simply to survive – under the weight of the rest of society. The state, because it could not tax the wealth of the privileged adequately, heaped taxes on the powerless. Because it lacked the administration to collect land-taxes directly, it made village councillors responsible for extracting revenue from their neighbours, or paying it themselves. Because it desperately needed money in advance, it farmed out the collection of excise taxes on goods to commercial enterprises, who profiteered from everything they could collect above what they had paid, and used armed thugs in the countryside to deliver those returns.

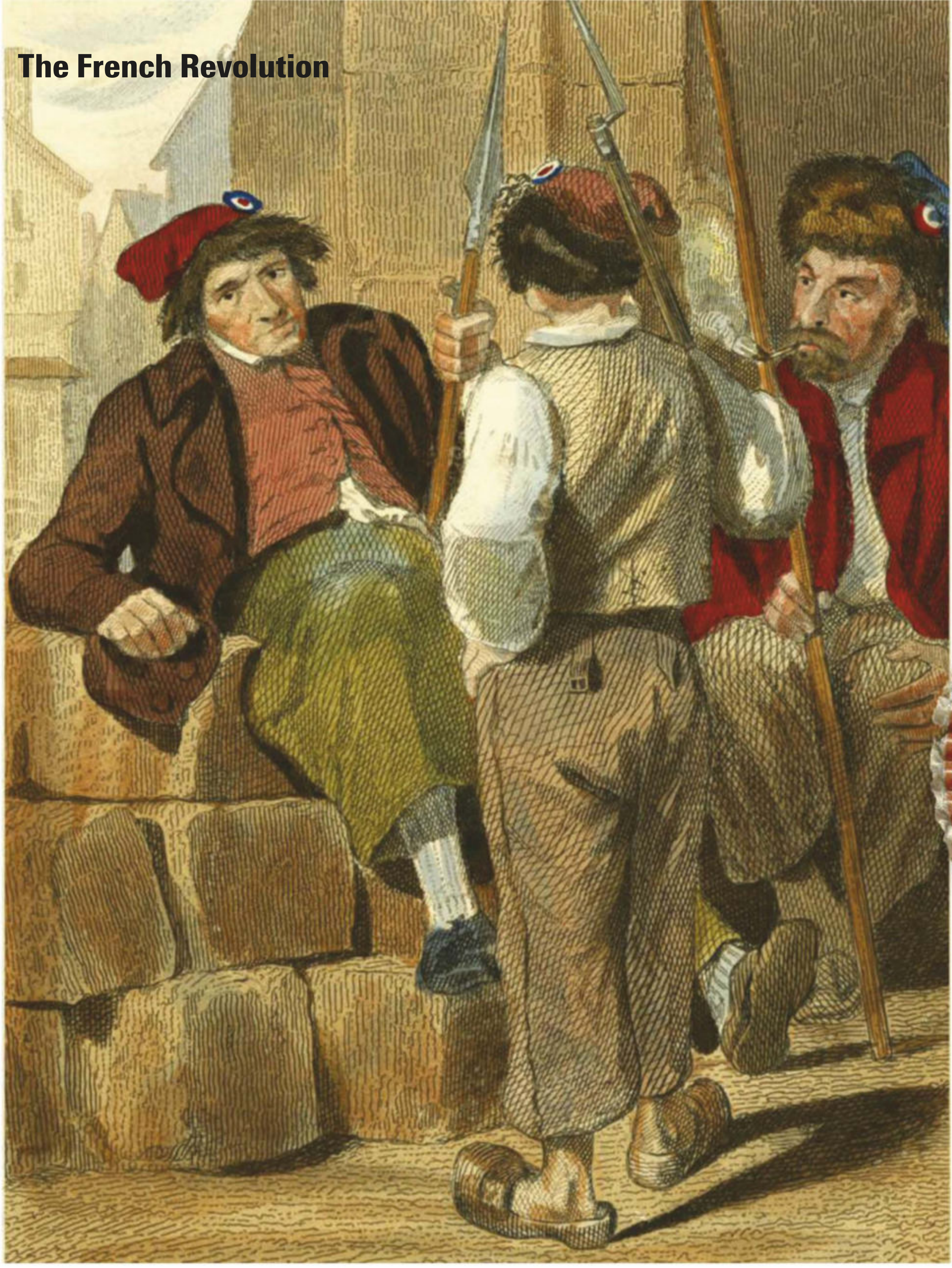
Meanwhile the church demanded its tithes on peasant crops, much of which disappeared into wealthy abbeys and cathedral chapters, while priests charged for their services, and peasants struggled to gain the use of hospitals and orphanages their sweat had paid for. Alongside this, the seigneurs, the lords of the manor, charged their own percentage of the crop, tolls on bridges, fees for monopoly control of milling, and many other things, just because they could, and used their powers to appoint their own courts to enforce them.

Seigneurial rights were an investment, changing hands on an open market without any say for those they affected, into which the rising middle classes poured their life-savings, gaining social cachet and a secure retirement fund at the same time. What's more, they often intensified their enforcement of those rights with new abuses, precisely to secure that investment.

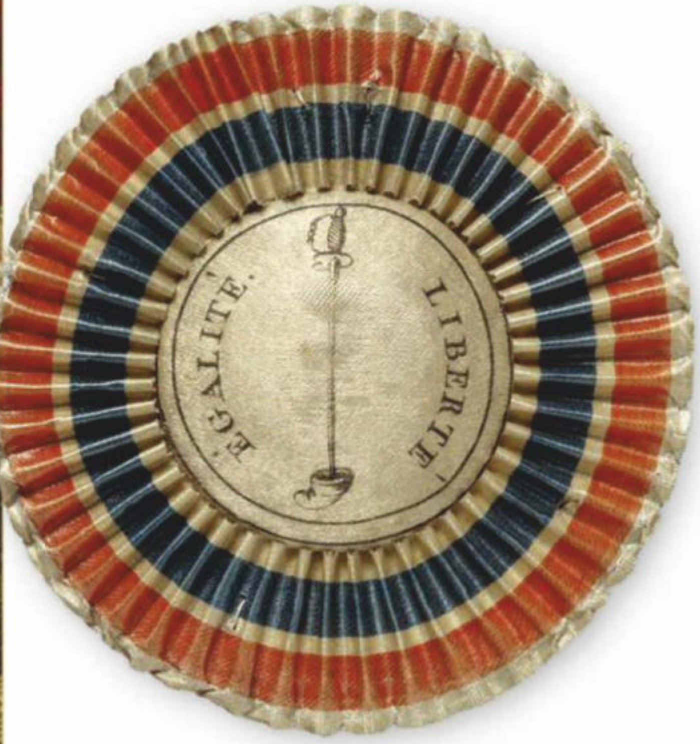
The fire beneath

Of all this, in 1789, the peasants had had enough. Most of the *cahiers de doléances* were expressed in the deferential terms of those used to the wrath of authority. But some allowed a glimpse of the fire beneath to show through. One village near Cahors in the south-west asked bitterly: "The lands of nobles and the church, should they not be subjected to taxation? Why protect them from it? Why subject the lands of poor people exclusively to it…?" The same document lamented their subjection to the feudal seigneurs, who have their abusive "charges… recognised as easily as one changes a shirt".

Village communities threw off the yoke of this entire 'Old Regime' even before the Estates-General gathered, and while it wrangled fruitlessly through May and early

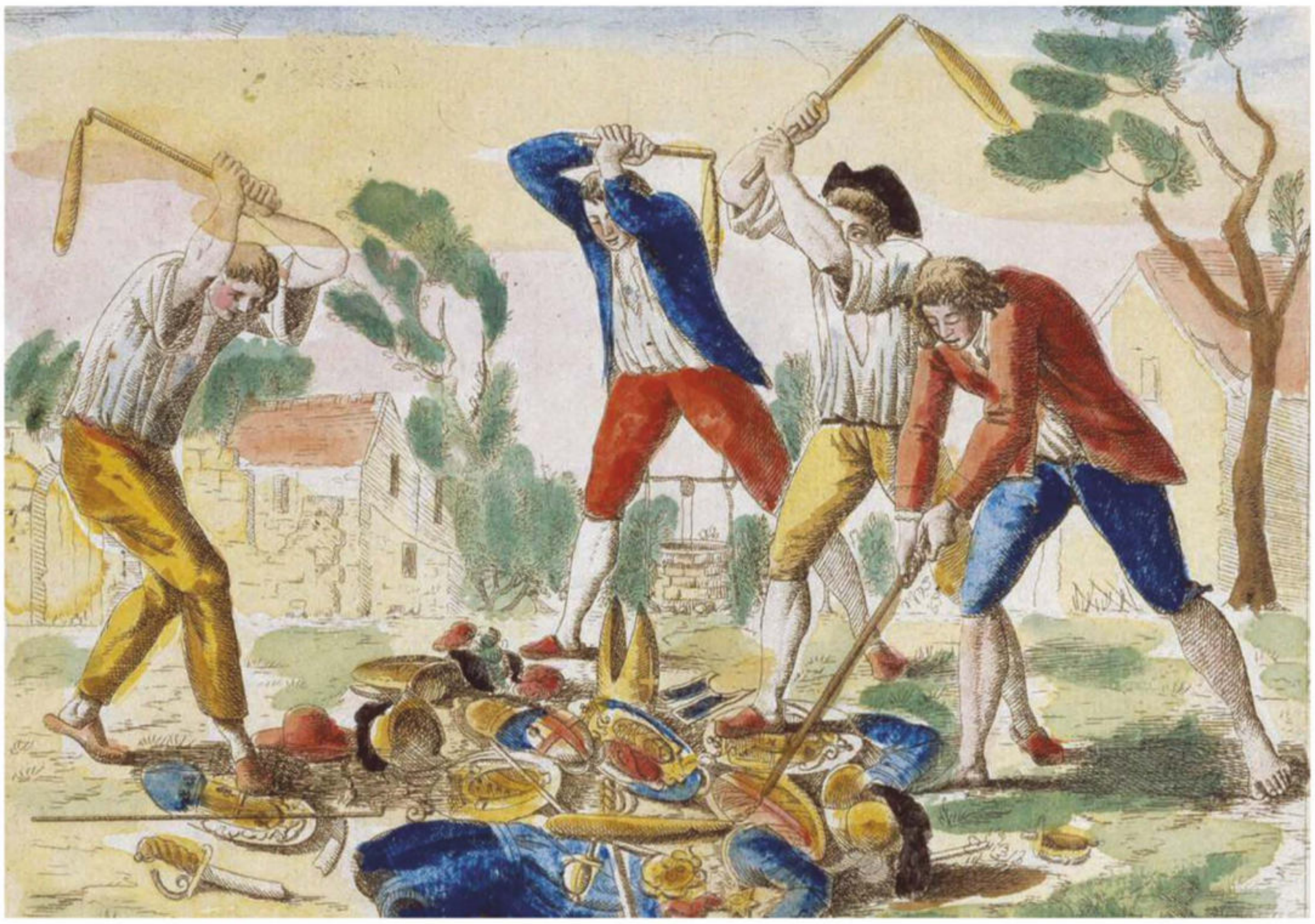


Dashed hopes
A depiction of "lower-class" revolutionaries. When the revolution failed to deliver the liberty and equality they sought, many reacted with fury



A cockade of the French republic, from after 1789. The men and women who wore these colours often had disparate – if not competing – aims

Thrashing it out
Peasants beat the trappings of the aristocracy and church with threshing flails – as depicted in a contemporary etching. It was their grievances that had triggered the momentous events of 1789, yet soon the revolutionary elite in Paris were scorning their achievements



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June, peasants up and down the land were declaring themselves freed of their obligations, just like Avançon, or going further. Seigneurial and monastic granaries were emptied, registers of seigneurial rights were ceremoniously destroyed, game-reserves were assailed, fences broken down, and from one end of France to the other, the message that taxes and tithes would not be paid again in their old, abusive forms was declared to the faces of bemused officials.

Events in Versailles and Paris that summer followed their own path of political crisis and urban insurrection, throwing up iconic moments, from the Estates-General's renaming as the National Assembly, to the 'Tennis Court Oath', in which the assembly vowed not to disband until a new constitution had been adopted, to the Parisians' storming of the Bastille in defence against any attempt to disband the assembly.

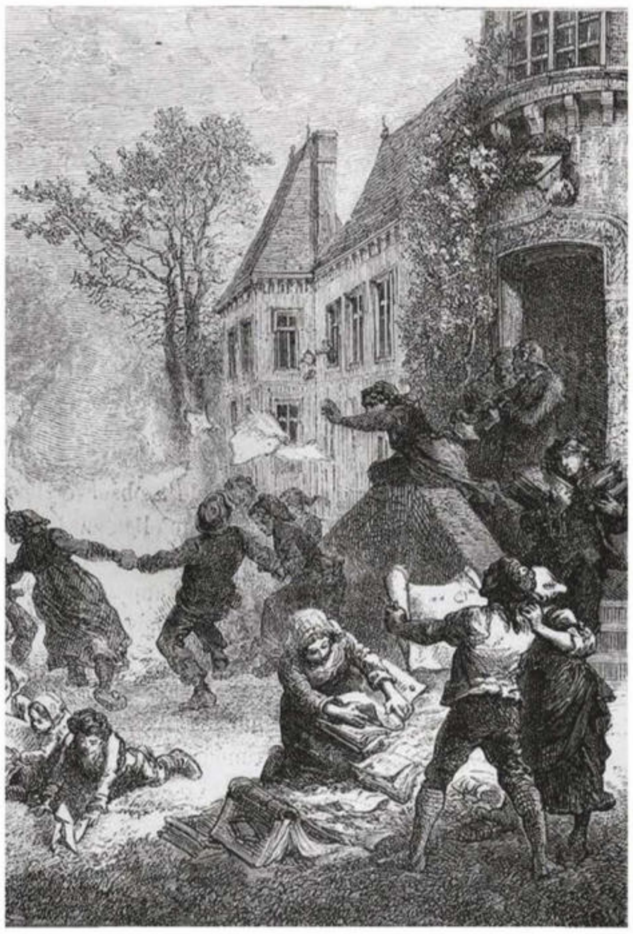
The peasantry only came onto the scene in the form of rumours of disorder, and fears from the politicians that widespread discontent might be manipulated by the new revolution's enemies. A manoeuvre to pacify the peasants by removing the feudal burden became, almost by accident, an ecstatic festival of the end of 'privilege' on 4 August, leading on to the resonant language of the Declaration of the Rights of Man at the end of that month. But while the new revolutionaries were doing all this, they were also overlooking, and in some cases scorning, what the peasantry had already done.

Blighted by snobbery

Almost the first declaration of the new assembly in June had been that the state's debts would be honoured, and taxes should continue to be paid until replaced. They did the same for the church's tithes when they "abolished feudalism" in August. Going further, they were careful to insist that all the most valuable seigneurial rights to regular payments were in fact not abolished, but merely made redeemable: for a lump-sum of 20 years' payments (an unimaginable amount for most), the peasants could escape their burden, but otherwise would continue to owe it in perpetuity. The middle and upper classes' investments in seigneurial status were valuable private property, and as such, and written into the Declaration of Rights, could only be done away with if covered by a "just and prior indemnity".

In these terms, their vision clouded by distance, snobbery and self-interest, the revolutionaries set up the conditions for an intermittent, but entirely real, insurrection in the countryside, from the very start of their new order. Peasants felt betrayed, as seigneurs – many of whom were overtly hostile to the new order – were able to use the letter of the law to vex them for payments.

By 1793, the republic had so alienated many peasants that they provided the footsoldiers for a counter-revolutionary war



Fuelling the fire

Farmers burn registers of feudal rights in 1789. The new republic's failure to fully release peasants from their obligations to the church and landowners created the conditions for a surge in bloodletting

MARY EVANS

Local urban-based authorities were infuriated by peasant tax-refusal, to the point of sending armed militia expeditions to enforce payment at gunpoint. Religion became a flashpoint after the state seized church assets, turning half the priesthood, and many among their flocks, against the new order. Some things the revolutionary rulers did, like letting landlords add the value of abolished tithes and taxes to rents, made sense to them as measures to keep capital in circulation. But to impoverished tenant-farmers, whose landlords might be the same urban-based alien class that increasingly dominated local politics, it could seem like the cruellest oppression.

Long before Louis XVI tried to flee the country in 1791, pitching the revolution towards further radicalisation, war and a republic the next year, the countryside was wracked with waves of resistance, to local overlords, state impositions, or both.

At first similar to the overwhelming events of 1789, in which there were strikingly few casualties, rural unrest became steadily more traumatic, and more inclined to lead to deaths, as the wider political climate deteriorated.

By 1793, despite conceding the final abolition of feudal payments without compensation, the republic had so alienated many peasants that they provided the footsoldiers for a counter-revolutionary civil war. Many others fought with equal dedication on the other side, embracing the gains of revolution, and the resultant strife was a prime cause of what history calls 'the Terror'. In the western region of the Vendée, the result was the death of hundreds of thousands, and a bitter heritage of cultural and political division that endures to this day.

One of the great tragedies of the era was that they had to fight at all, and much of the blame for that lies with the blinkered elites who had made a new order, forgetting who it was that had really shattered the old one.

David Andress is a professor of modern history at the University of Portsmouth. His most recent book is *The French Revolution: A Peasants' Revolt*, published by Head of Zeus in 2019

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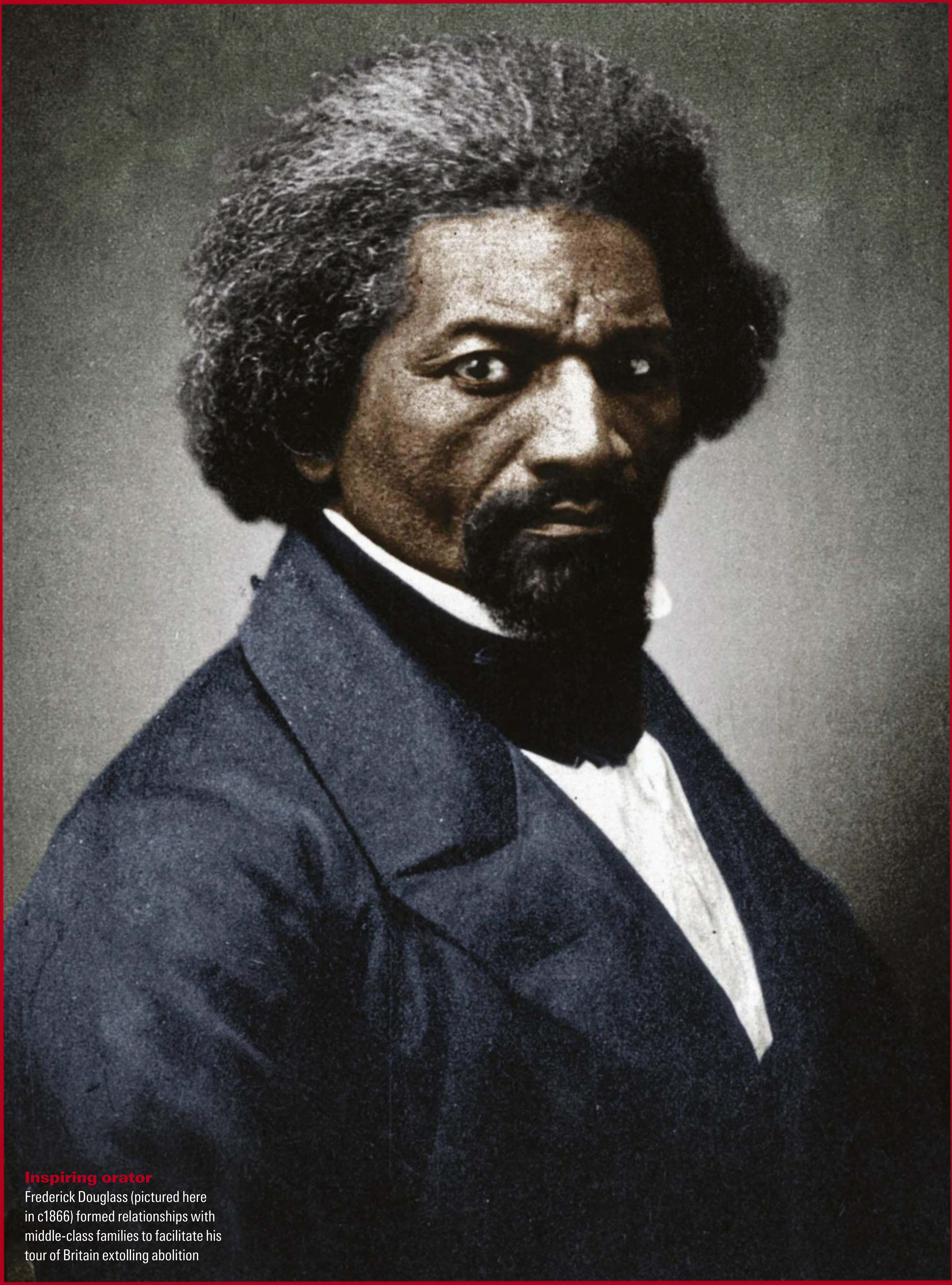


Inspiring orator
Frederick Douglass (pictured here in c1866) formed relationships with middle-class families to facilitate his tour of Britain extolling abolition

GETTY IMAGES

“Welcome not those brazen human fleshmongers… Have no fellowship with these merciless menstealers”

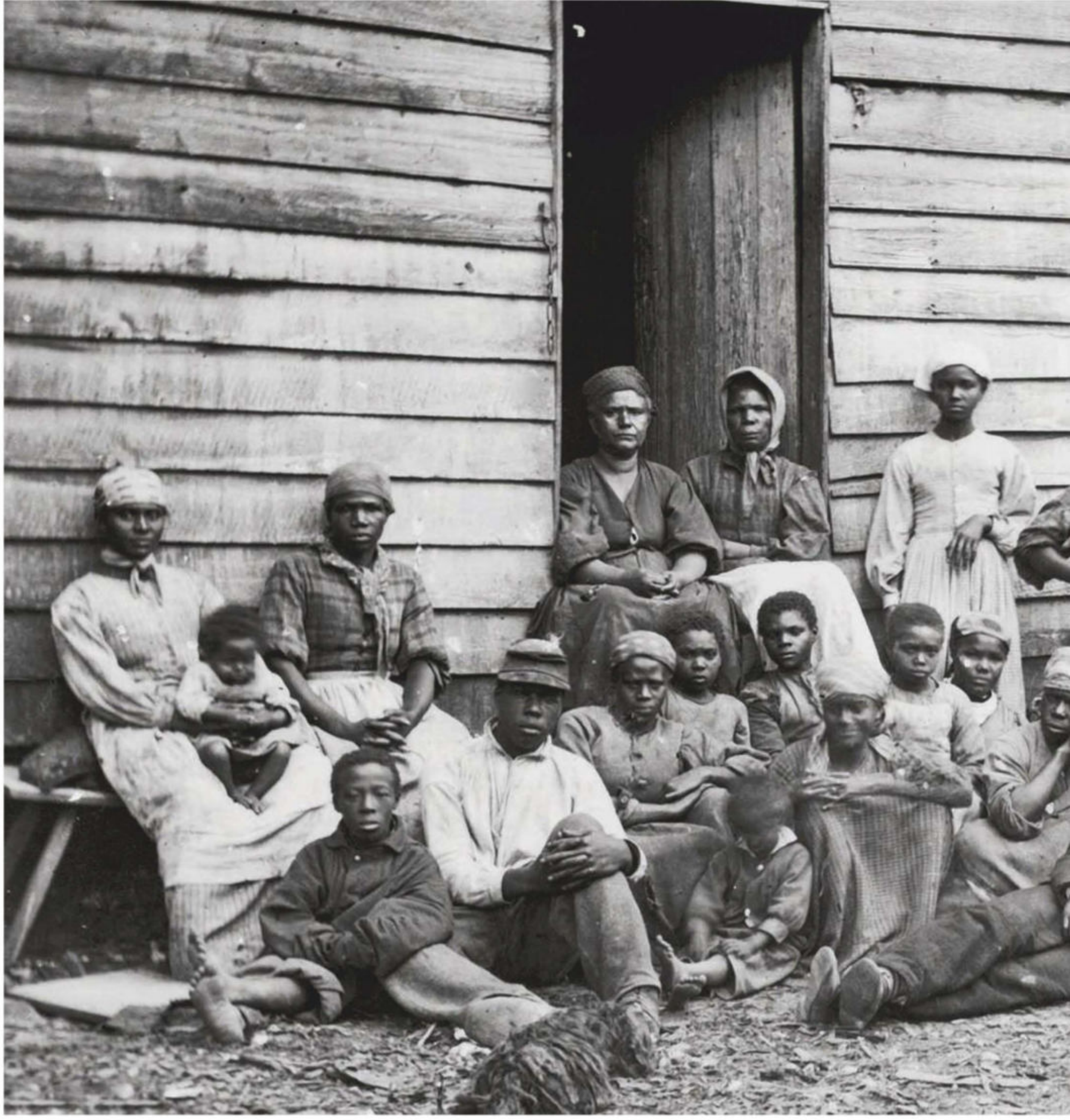
In their battle to end the horrors of slavery, African-American abolitionists headed across the Atlantic to rally support. **Hannah-Rose Murray** tells the story of the firebrands who toured the British Isles, shocking audiences and shining a spotlight on Britain’s own crimes

Murmurs spread around London’s Finsbury Chapel, quickly followed by shouts and the thunderous stamping of feet. “It’s not true!” an audience member cried out, his voice ringing out loudly from the almost 3,000-strong crowd.

It was May 1846. Standing on the platform addressing the audience was radical activist and formerly enslaved African-American Frederick Douglass, who had provoked the audience member’s wrath with his attacks on slavery. Douglass had listed countless facts to prove his assertions. With blistering rhetoric, he argued that each American enslaver should be “surrounded by a wall of antislavery fire, so that he may see the condemnation of himself and his system glaring down in letters of light”. He spoke passionately and forcefully because his cause was urgent: Douglass knew that as he spoke in London, black women, men and children – including his own family members – were at that very moment suffering and dying across the US.

Frederick Douglass was not the first nor the last black abolitionist to traverse the Atlantic during the 19th century in order to expose “the secrets of the prison-house of bondage”. Scores of these “advocates of freedom” travelled to England, Ireland, Scotland and even remote parts of rural Wales to educate the public on American slavery. At least 100 lectured in large cities and tiny fishing villages, interacting with Chartists, authors, politicians, scientists, ministers, reformers, and even royalty. They inspired poetry, songs, pamphlets, wax models at Madame Tussauds, and hundreds of editorials to the press. Millions of British and Irish people witnessed their lectures, read about their lives in narratives or newspapers, or purchased their photographs. And many gave generously to the antislavery cause in response.

Most activists began their journeys in the late 1830s. After formally abolishing the slave trade, the British government prohibited slavery in the empire after a short period of apprenticeship which legally ended in 1838. Although slavery continued to exist in parts of the empire, British abolitionists turned their attention to the Americas, where the system had been embedded since the 16th century.



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While the northern states had largely abolished slavery by the early 19th century, it was entrenched in the South. There, the domestic slave trade flourished: by 1850, 4 million men, women and children lived in bondage. Those who managed to escape formed the heart of the transatlantic antislavery movement.

African-Americans travelled to Victorian Britain for a multitude of reasons. Many sought donations to legally purchase freedom for themselves (if they'd escaped the US with fugitive status) as well as family members, while some collected money for antislavery societies and community causes such as the construction of black schools and churches. Others encouraged boycotts of slave-produced goods. Some settled here permanently, or for a few years in order to escape slave-hunters, who patrolled the northern states waiting to drag fugitives back into the jaws of slavery. Most importantly though, activists wanted to educate the public about slavery, a difficult task as some activists felt that the true nature of its evils could never be described.

From Inverness to Penzance

It is impossible to know how many hundreds of thousands of lectures were given by black abolitionists during the 19th century. But building on brilliant research by historians like Jeff Green and Richard Blackett, I have mapped some of their speaking locations. Black women and men travelled from Inverness to Penzance and reached virtually every corner of Britain and Ireland. They spoke in Pembroke, Keswick, Bakewell and Peterhead; in tiny fishing villages like Cullercoats and Ventnor, and large cities such as London, Manchester, Dublin and Edinburgh. Speaking venues ranged from churches, town halls and school rooms to YMCA buildings and mechanics' institutions, to the private parlour rooms of wealthy patrons, and failing that, parks and outdoor spaces. These digital maps reveal that many of us walk past sites with a rich history of black activism on a daily basis.

Usually, if an activist had a contact in such places, the way would be paved for them. Frederick Douglass stayed with the Estlin family in Bristol, where he lectured at least six times, and lodged with the Richardsons in Newcastle, where he gave 11 speeches. Both families were from the middling classes and had extensive connections to the proprietors of town halls or religious ministers who allowed Douglass a hearing. They also exploited connections with friends in neighbouring cities to secure further meetings.

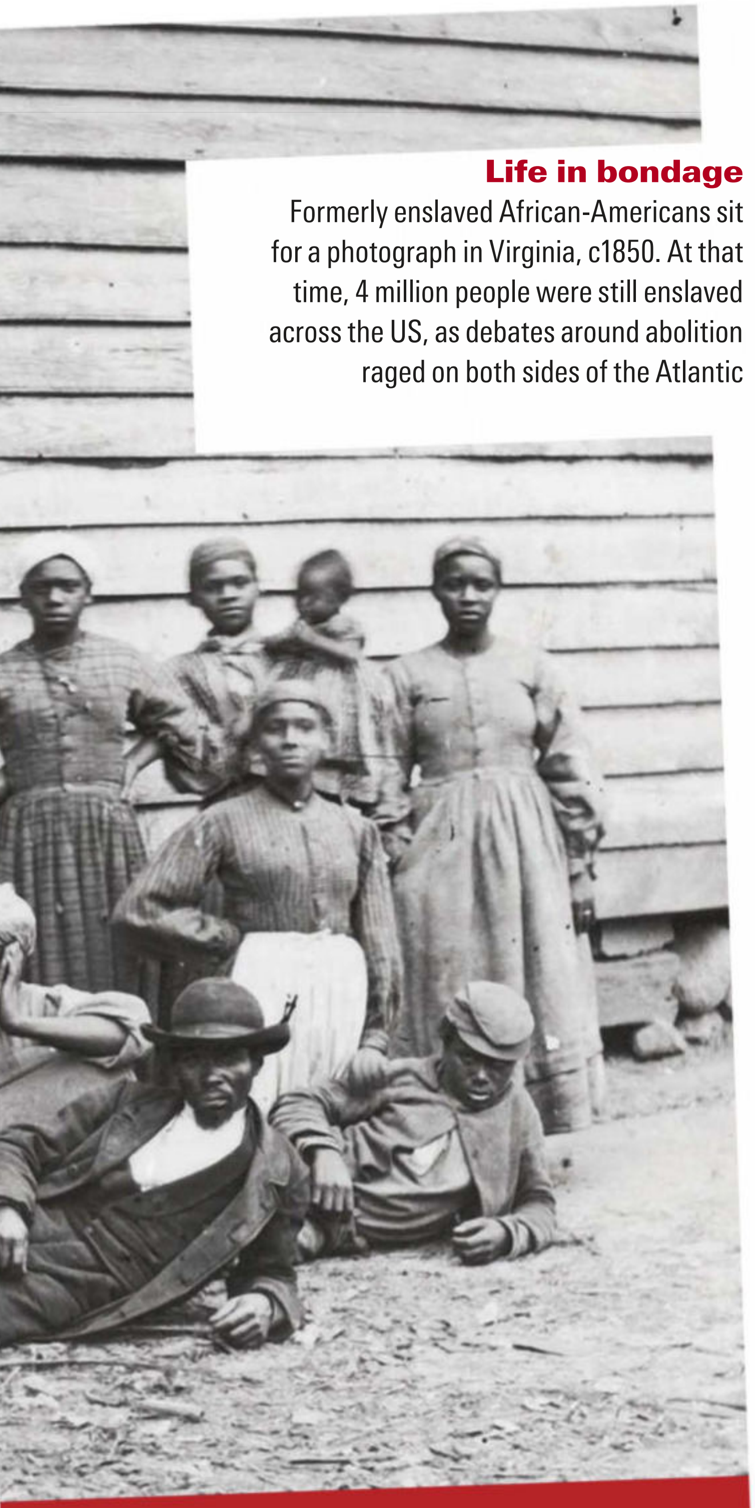
Middle-class abolitionist sympathisers did not just organise meetings for members of their own class, though. Whether antislavery lectures were free or charged an admission, most were open to anyone, and the Victorian press frequently made reference to working-class women and men who attended, often with their children. Activists even coordinated meetings specifically for working-class audiences or even children's groups, adjusting the price or time to better coincide with their intended audience.

Activists pointed to the hypocritical concept of British liberty, highlighting how racism was also pervasive on British soil

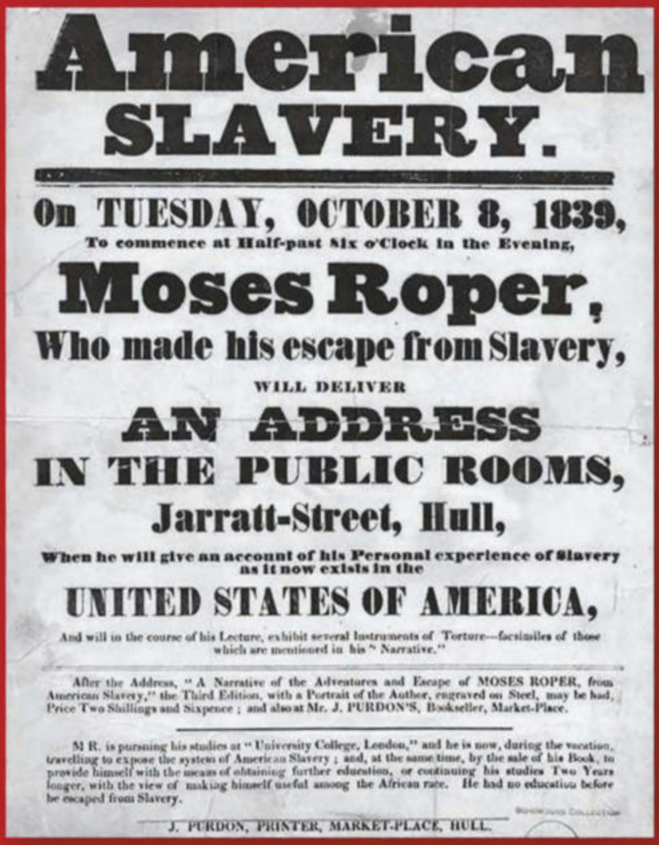
Apprising the people of Briton of the horrors of slavery was not easy. As William Wells Brown mournfully told his audience in the early 1850s, if he were to accurately tell of the "true character" of slavery, he would need to "pluck a feather from the wing of some fallen angel, dip it in the wailings of despair, and write upon the blackened walls of perdition in characters which would frighten the hyena out of his ferocity".

During lectures, black activists employed numerous tactics to rally support. They used fiery rhetoric and highlighted the hypocrisy of an American nation that professed freedom but yet enslaved millions, often describing the torture enacted upon themselves or their family. In doing so, they sometimes illustrated slavery's barbarity by showing their scarred backs or exhibiting instruments of torture such as whips, chains, manacles and whipping posts.

William Wells Brown and Washington



Life in bondage
Formerly enslaved African-Americans sit for a photograph in Virginia, c1850. At that time, 4 million people were still enslaved across the US, as debates around abolition raged on both sides of the Atlantic



American
SLAVERY.

On TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1839,
To commence at Half-past Six o'Clock in the Evening,
Moses Roper,
Who made his escape from Slavery,
WILL DELIVER
AN ADDRESS
IN THE PUBLIC ROOMS,
Jarratt-Street, Hull,
When he will give an account of his Personal experience of Slavery as it now exists in the
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
And will in the course of his Lecture, exhibit several Instruments of Torture—facsimiles of those which are mentioned in his "Narrative."

After the Address, "A Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of MOSES ROPER, from American Slavery," the Third Edition, with a Portrait of the Author, engraved on Steel, may be had, Price Two Shillings and Sixpence; and also at Mr. J. PURDON'S, Bookseller, Market-Place.

M R. is pursuing his studies at "University College, London," and he is now, during the vacation, travelling to expose the system of American Slavery; and, at the same time, by the sale of his Book, to provide himself with the means of obtaining further education, or continuing his studies Two Years longer, with the view of making himself useful among the African race. He had no education before he escaped from Slavery.

J. PURDON, PRINTER, MARKET-PLACE, HULL.

Explosive testimony
A poster advertising a lecture delivered by Moses Roper at an anti-slavery meeting in Hull, 1839. Roper's graphic descriptions of the torture to which he had been subjected caused uproar at the meetings and alienated some British abolitionists

Duff revealed paintings and huge 2,000-square-foot canvas panoramas depicting their enslaved life and the punishments they had endured. Henry 'Box' Brown, who had escaped slavery by posting himself from Richmond to Philadelphia in a crate, exhibited said box and even re-enacted his escape by packaging himself up on a train from Leeds to Bradford. In 1857, Brown took the performative leap further by starring in a play based on his life.

Husband and wife William and Ellen Craft also retold the story of their equally miraculous escape, in which Ellen crossed the boundaries of race, class, gender and physical ability by dressing as a disabled southern gentleman while her husband posed as her enslaved servant. Showcasing Ellen's extraordinary bravery, upon which the entire scheme rested, their story captivated the British public. The Crafts remained in the country for nearly two decades, raising five children in freedom.

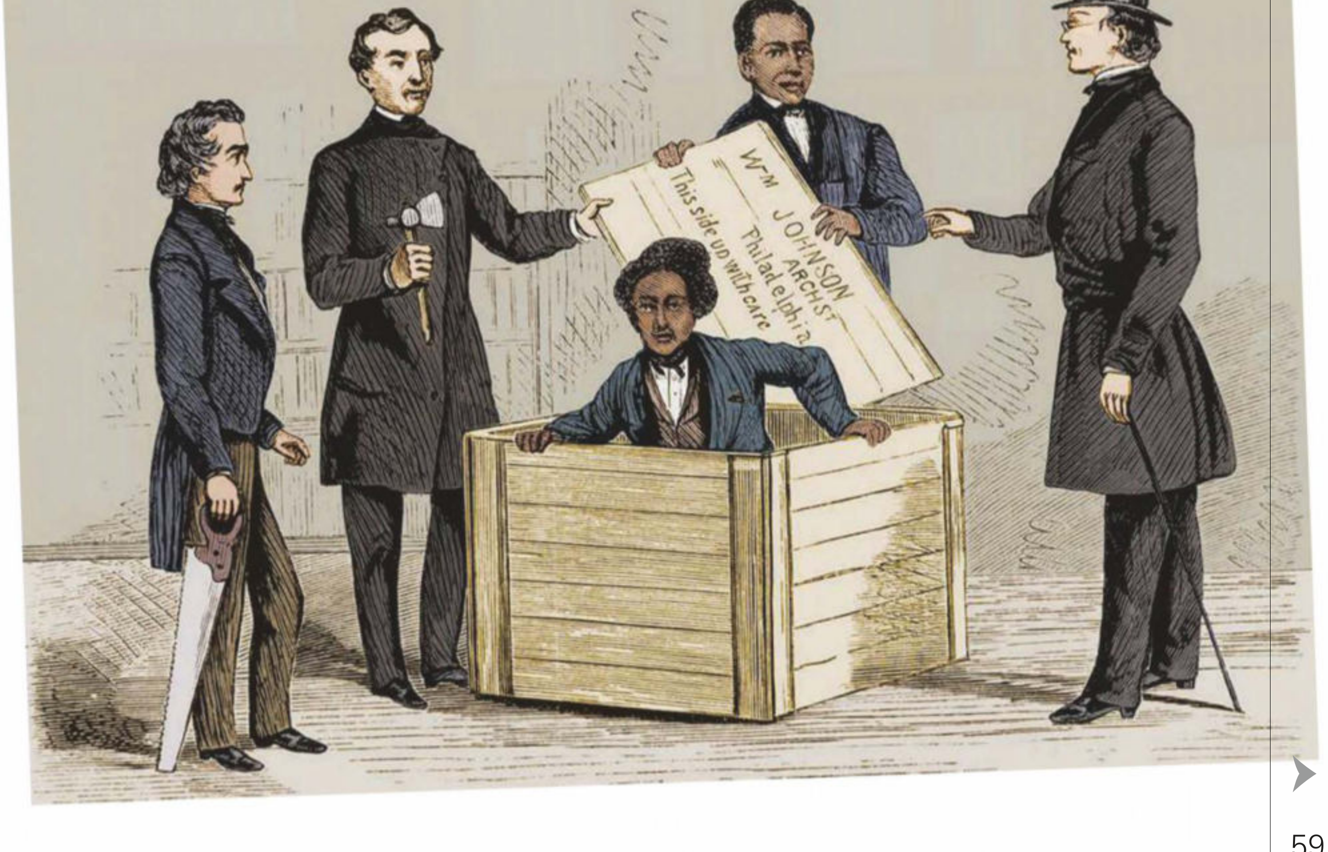
It was clear formerly enslaved individuals stirred the public's hearts with their stories. During Henry Highland Garnet's speech in Carlisle in 1850, a sailor declared that while he had witnessed scenes of slavery, "he had never looked upon them in the light in which he then saw them; and though he had used tobacco for nearly 30 years, he had chewed his last quid that night". But the brutal and sometimes controversial subject matter meant antislavery meetings could be rowdy, turbulent and even dangerous. Moses Roper, who began lecturing as early as 1837, radically refused to compromise on graphic descriptions of the torture he was exposed to. As a result, some audiences – most of whom could not comprehend the reality of his experience – turned against him. Roper was spurned by several British and Irish abolitionists, too: believing in antislavery doctrines did not necessarily mean they were willing to help every fugitive or were antiracist. However, Roper's slave narrative – a short biography and one of the most important protest tools of the transatlantic antislavery movement – was a success. Designed to expose the truth and cruelty of enslavers, Roper's slave narrative sold 25,000 copies, including 5,000 in Welsh, after just seven years of publication. In a bold move, he sent his story to every enslaver he could remember in the county where he had lived in North Carolina.

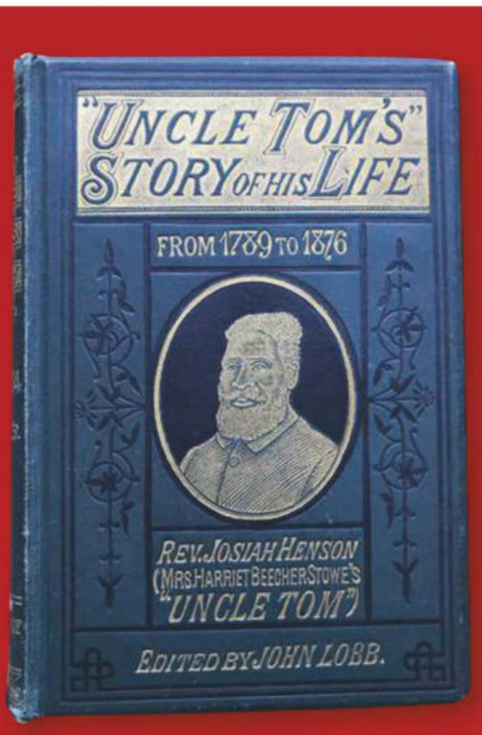
Soil reddened with blood

Many activists were unafraid to confront audiences in Britain with the uncomfortable fact of their nation's own culpability. They pointed to the hypocritical concept of British liberty, highlighting how racism was also pervasive on British soil – evidenced by the success of minstrel shows and the growth of racial science. In 1854, Samuel Ringgold Ward declared to a York audience that English soil was "reddened with the blood of my race" and blasted the government for ignoring black British sailors kidnapped and sold into slavery in US ports like Savannah.

Other controversial subjects brought charges of heresy. During Frederick Douglass's 1845–47 tour of Britain, he attacked the Free Church of Scotland for accepting donations from US enslavers and religious ministers. Southern churches were, he said, "literally built up in human skulls, and their walls cemented with human blood" as

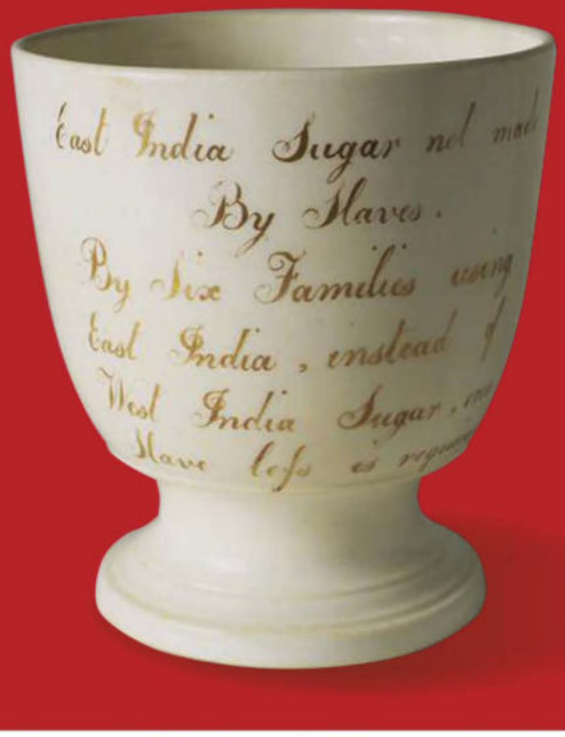
Lifting the lid Henry 'Box' Brown emerging from the crate he used to mail himself to freedom. Brown re-enacted his escape for audiences in Britain

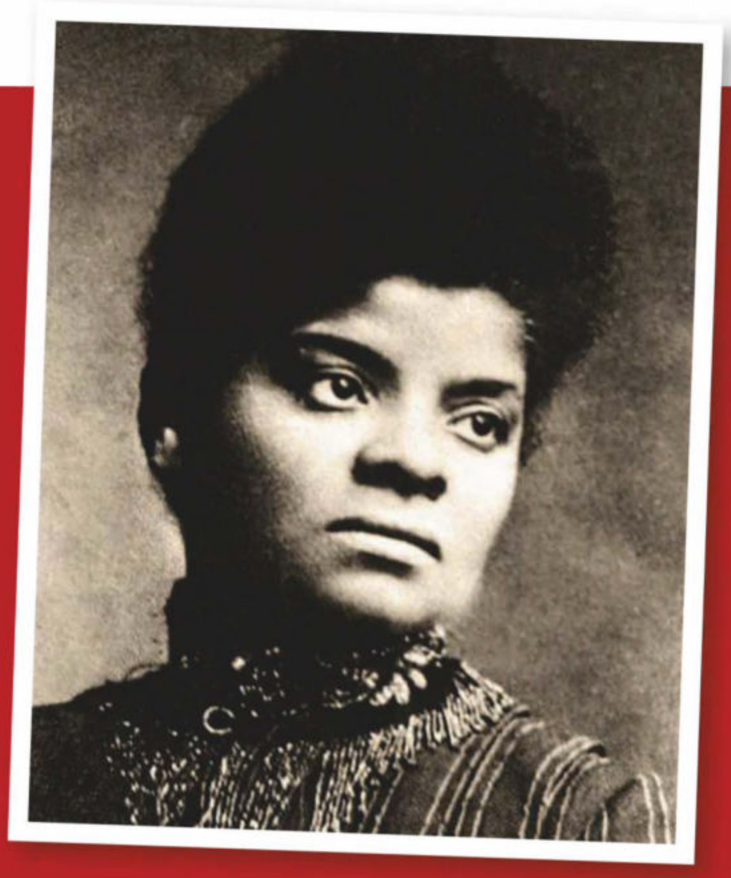



"UNCLE TOM'S" STORY OF HIS LIFE
FROM 1789 TO 1876
REV. JOSIAH HENSON
(MRS HARRIET BEECHER STOWE'S "UNCLE TOM")
EDITED BY JOHN LOBB.

Momentous memoir
The autobiography of Josiah Henson. This formerly enslaved African-American's story was said to have inspired the character of Tom in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Purchasing power
A sugar bowl bearing a message encouraging consumers to boycott slave-produced products





Freedom fighter
Civil rights activist Ida B Wells, who toured Britain in the 1890s to educate British audiences about slavery's pervasive legacy

husbands were torn from wives, children forcibly separated from parents and the money used to buy Bibles, employ ministers or build places of worship. Douglass exposed the hypocrisy of a "Free" church which had taken such "blood" money, and electrified audiences across Scotland with his mantra: "Send back the money!" Thousands rallied to support him, often cramming into town or church halls, craning their necks to listen through open windows. They daubed Douglass's slogan on Free Church buildings with red paint, and two Quaker women even accompanied him to the top of Edinburgh's Arthur's Seat to carve it into the hillside.

The two decades that followed Douglass's sensational tours in the 1840s represented the peak of African-American visits to Britain. Many exploited the success of Harriet Beecher Stowe's anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, first published in 1852. Others specifically travelled to the British Isles to lecture on the American Civil War (1861–65). Slavery was at the heart of this bloody conflict, and African-American activists like James C Thompson and William Henry Jackson travelled thousands of miles to stir up support for the Union and to denounce the Confederacy. While there was strong support for the North in Britain, the issue was divisive and these meetings could turn tense, often resulting in frequent interruptions, racial slurs, and cheers for the Confederate president Jefferson Davis. When Britain came perilously close to formally recognising the Confederacy, activists once again tried to rally the British people to their call. Frederick Douglass sent a blazing appeal via the transatlantic press: "Welcome not those brazen human fleshmongers – those brokers in the bodies and souls of men… Have no fellowship, I pray you, with these merciless menstealers." In the end, Britain narrowly decided not to support the Confederacy, although it's impossible to tell whether Douglass's searing address had any influence on the governing elite's decision.

Formerly enslaved individuals had a very real impact on the abolitionist movement. Those who knew the true value of freedom were its best advocates

An ongoing battle

After the end of the Civil War and the onset of legal abolition in 1865, black activists continued to be in the vanguard of those defying slavery's bitter legacies. Activists like Ida B Wells educated transatlantic audiences on racism and the convict lease system, in which primarily African-American prisoners were forced into labouring for private companies, with no pay and poor conditions. Wells conducted two successful anti-lynching tours in 1893–94, and like her antebellum forebears, she used every tool at her disposal, displaying photos of lynchings to convey how pervasive racism and white supremacy continued to threaten black lives.

By journeying to Britain, African-Americans took radical steps to expose slavery to international audiences. In reliving their trauma in urgent, emotional appeals, formerly enslaved individuals had a very real and positive impact on the abolitionist movement abroad. For many, it was the only way they could help the cause. As Moses Roper put it: "I would lay down my life to save them [the enslaved], but I dare not put my foot on American ground: I should be dragged in chains to an ignominious and cruel death."

Those who knew the true value of freedom were its best advocates, and figures like Douglass, Roper and countless others were unafraid to speak out, and put their lives on the line for the cause. Their testimony still matters today because we continue, as they did, to fight for a just and equal world. H

Hannah-Rose Murray is the author of *Advocates of Freedom* (CUP). She runs the website *frederickdouglassinbritain.com* and leads walking tours in London and Edinburgh: *blackabolitionistwalkingtours.wordpress.com*

MORE FROM US Hannah-Rose Murray will be discussing black abolitionists in Britain on our **podcast**. Listen at *historyextra.com/podcast*

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Finds such as the Chew Valley Hoard, a collection of rare Conquest-era coins, have helped change our perception of Britain's past

Unburied treasures

From Bronze Age cups to souvenirs from Hadrian's Wall to coins hidden at the height of the Viking wars, the British public has discovered hundreds of thousands of archaeological finds, many of which have been recorded with the **Portable Antiquities Scheme**. Now, 23 years after it was founded, the PAS – run by the British Museum and Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales – has recorded more than 1.5 million finds. To mark that milestone, we asked six PAS archaeologists to nominate 10 discoveries that they believe have done most to transform our knowledge of the past…

COMPILED BY **MICHAEL LEWIS**

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The Ringlemere Cup's rounded base suggests that it may have been passed around like a modern-day communion vessel

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1 A taste of the Bronze Age

The Ringlemere Cup gives us the rarest of glimpses of life in Britain more than three millennia ago

We know very little about the people who occupied the south-east corner of the British Isles 3,500 years ago. Yet a little light was shone onto this distant world on 4 November 2001, when metal-detectorist Cliff Bradshaw started scanning the fields of Ringlemere Farm, near Sandwich in Kent.

What Bradshaw found nestled beneath the surface that day is one of the oldest treasures ever discovered in Britain. It was a Bronze Age gold vessel dated to 1700–1500 BC, and such was its age and rarity (it is one of only two gold Bronze Age cups found in England) that it was acquired by the British Museum.

The Ringlemere Cup was originally 11cm high with corrugated sides. I say 'originally' because, when Bradshaw discovered the vessel, it was severely misshapen – presumably after being hit by a farmer's plough. Had Bradshaw not chanced across the object, it might have been lost forever.

So what was the cup used for – and by whom? We can only guess. But a clue is provided by the fact that it has a rounded base. This means that the vessel could not stand alone, suggesting it might have had a ritual use – perhaps it was held or passed around, a bit like a modern-day communion vessel. Maybe it was made to carry an alcoholic or herbed drink as part of a ceremony – although that is, of course, firmly in the

2 Following the money

The discovery of thousands of coins suggests that Roman Britain may have been an agricultural powerhouse

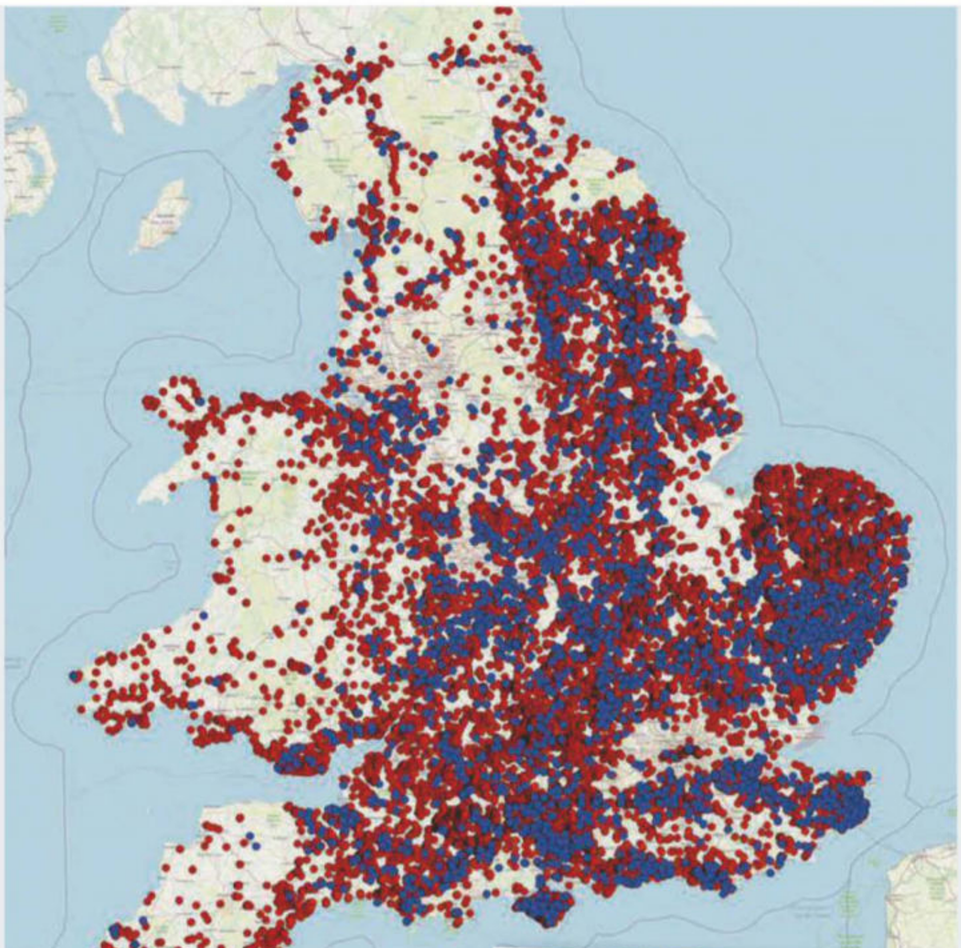
'Grots'. It's not the most glamorous of words. But to historians of Roman Britain, it's a thing of beauty.

'Grots' is a term sometimes used to refer to the worn and corroded base-metal Roman coins discovered across England and Wales in their thousands. Every Roman emperor (not to mention almost all usurpers) issued their own coinage. This makes Roman coins a uniquely valuable source of information for the evolution of Roman Britain from Claudius's invasion in AD 43 through to the collapse of the province more than three centuries later.

What is perhaps most remarkable is the sheer number that have been identified. By 2005, the Portable Antiquities Scheme had recorded just over 34,000 Roman coins. In the intervening 15 years, the numbers have grown to 320,000 – the largest dataset of its kind worldwide.

But it is where these coins have been discovered – every bit as much as their volume – that has done most to shape our understanding of the province of Britannia. In short, the regions that have yielded the highest numbers don't necessarily correspond with those that traditionally come to mind when we think about 'Roman Britain'.

Take what is known as the Valentinianic period (AD 364–378). These 14 years in the second half of the fourth century have yielded high concentrations of coinage in the rural landscapes of the South



This map depicts the distribution of all Roman coins recorded by the PAS – like those shown right – across England and Wales; up to 2005 (in blue) and to date (in red)

PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME/FLICKR

realms of speculation!

What we are more confident of is that the cup was deposited (perhaps ritually) within a barrow in a prehistoric complex that dates back to c2300 BC, but with activity on the site going back even further in time. We also know that the Ringlemere Cup is one of six stylistically similar Bronze Age vessels that have been discovered across Europe – suggesting that, even at this distant point in history, ideas and skills were transmitted across the continent.

Yet it is unlikely that the cup itself was created on the continent. Archaeologists believe that this cup was probably made locally, maybe fairly close to its findspot – all of which means that the metalworking expertise required to create a high-status object like this almost certainly resided in Bronze Age Britain.

***Michael Lewis**, Head, PAS & Treasure, British Museum*

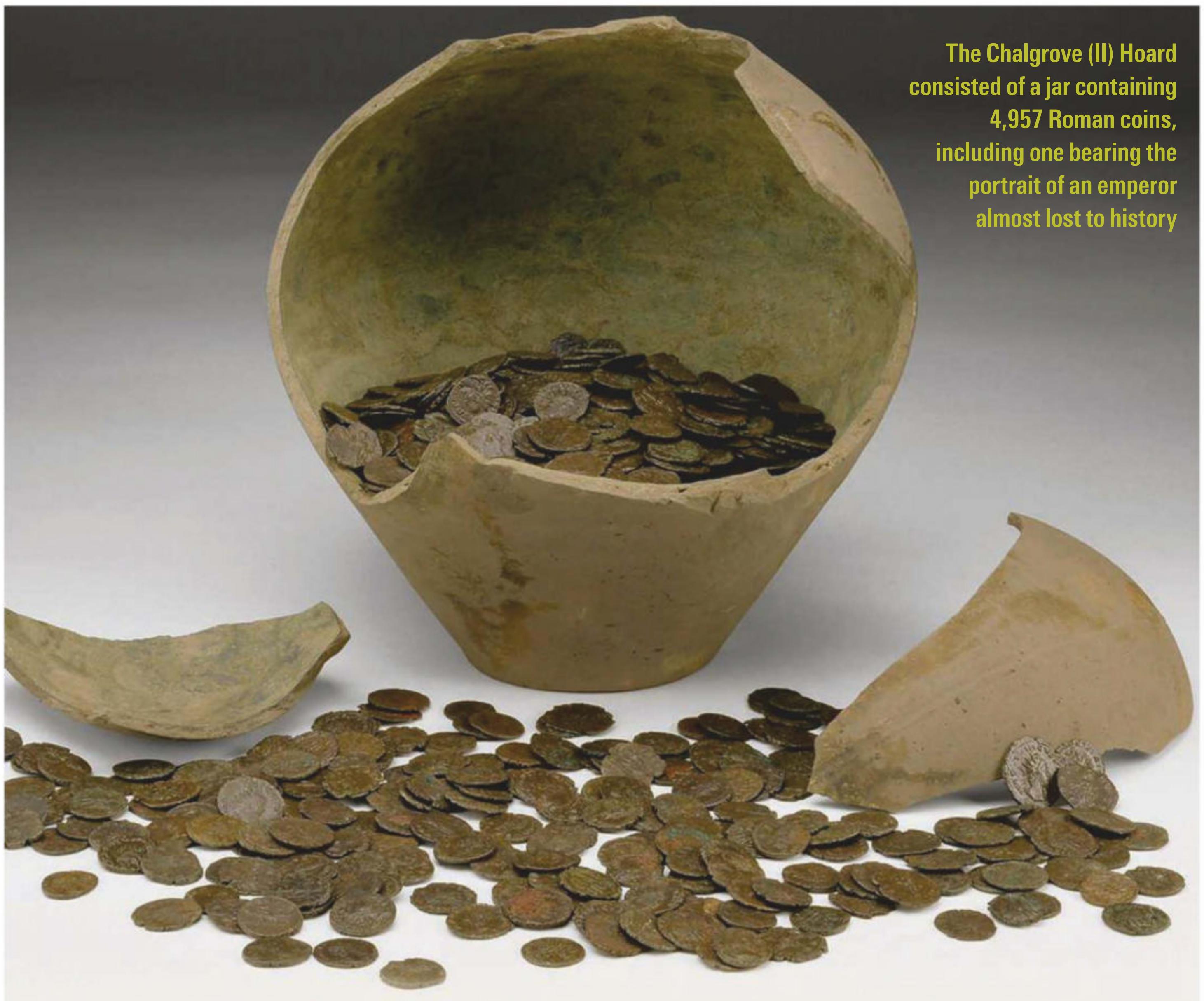
West (notably Wiltshire), East Anglia and Yorkshire. That is perhaps surprising in itself. But, when combined with other forms of evidence, it has helped cast Roman Britain in a whole new light.

The fourth century sees a growth of the rural landscape, villa construction, the fortification or reinforcement of rural settlements like Mildenhall in Wiltshire, and the appearance of other objects such as Late Roman military belt fittings. Meanwhile, literary sources highlight the importance of grain ships plying their trade between Britain and the Rhine.

This suggests that the rural Roman landscape may have been an important grain bowl in the late fourth century for the Roman armies on the Rhine, a conclusion almost unreachable prior to the PAS – and had it not been for the many 'grotty' Roman coins recorded.

***Andrew Brown**, assistant finds adviser and treasure curator, British Museum*

ALAMY/BRITISH MUSEUM-PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME



The Chalgrove (II) Hoard consisted of a jar containing 4,957 Roman coins, including one bearing the portrait of an emperor almost lost to history

3 The face that didn't fit

Few historians had heard of Domitianus – until a single coin suggested he may have been Roman emperor

Back in 2003, a metal-detectorist called Brian Malin was scouring farmland near Chalgrove, not far from Oxford, when he discovered a jar containing 4,957 Roman coins dating to between AD 251 and 279. The Chalgrove (II) hoard, as it's known, was a significant find but, seemingly, nothing out of the ordinary – after all, more than 600 hoards are known to have been discovered in Britain from this period.

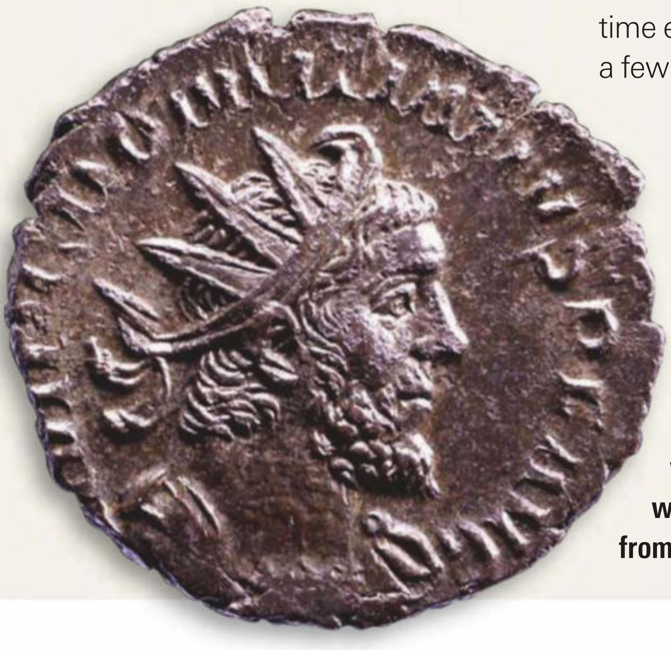
But then the coins were taken to the British Museum to be conserved and identified – and everything changed. For staring out from one of the coins was an individual that no one expected to see. He was a Roman emperor named Domitianus – and, until then, many historians didn't even believe he existed.

This wasn't the first time that Domitianus had appeared on archaeologists' radars. An identical coin, rediscovered in 2003, was found in a hoard in France in 1900, yet some scholars rejected it as a hoax because there was no supporting evidence for Domitianus. We now have that evidence, and it has enabled us to paint a partial picture of this little-known emperor.

Domitianus was, it seems, a very short-lived emperor of the Gallic empire, a breakaway state that existed north of the Alps between AD 260 and 274. A general of the same name was involved in a failed revolt in Milan in AD 268, but it is unclear if this is the same individual.

What we do know is that Domitianus became emperor in Gaul for a few days or weeks in AD 271. It was, it appears, the shortest of reigns – but time enough, at least, to mint a few coins!

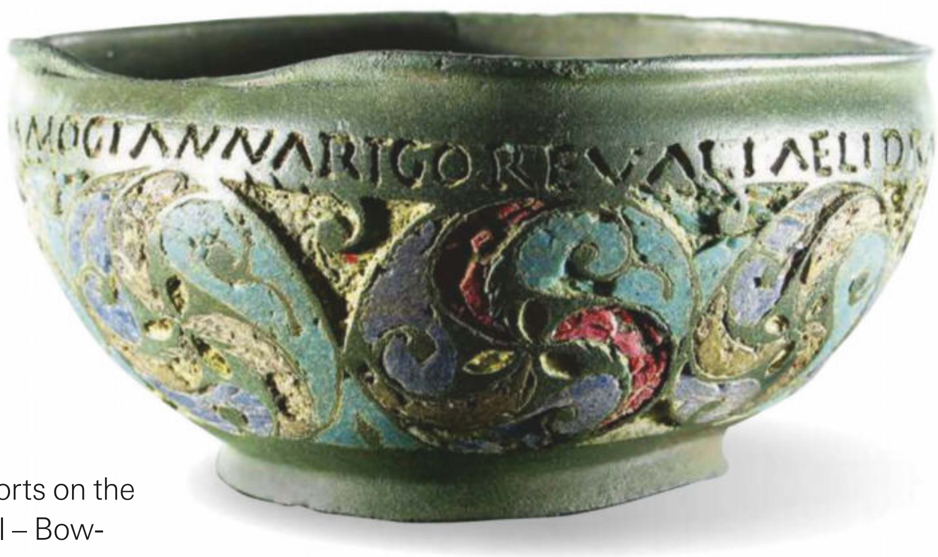
***Sam Moorhead**, national finds adviser, British Museum*



Those who doubted that there was a Roman emperor called Domitianus were forced into a rethink when this coin emerged from the Oxfordshire soil

4 Northern exposure

The Staffordshire Moorlands Pan is a remarkable souvenir of life guarding Hadrian's Wall



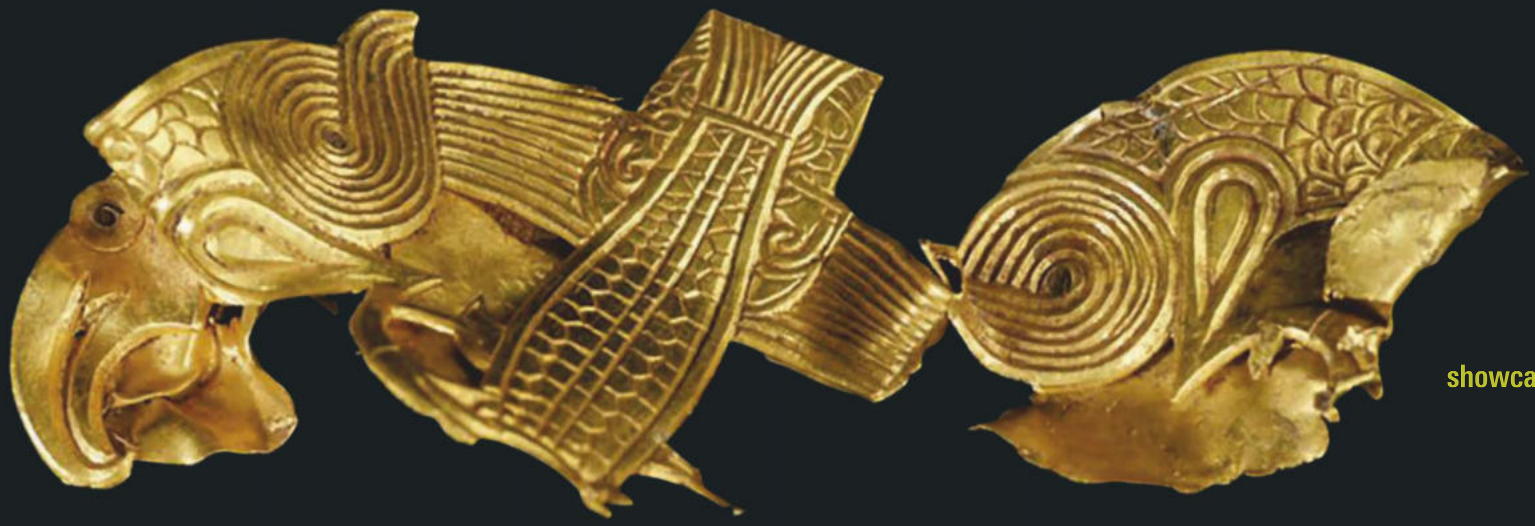
The pan name-checks four forts on the western end of Hadrian's Wall, as well as its likely owner – a man named Draco

For 300 years after its inception in AD 122, Hadrian's Wall was the most monumental element of a grid of garrisons and roads that formed Roman Britain's northern frontier. This mighty piece of Roman engineering would have made quite an impression on the many soldiers from across the empire who travelled north to man it. We know this from the letters and diary entries they wrote recording their experiences. We also know it from the works of art they commissioned as souvenirs of their time on the empire's edge – the most striking surviving example of which is surely the Staffordshire Moorlands Pan.

Discovered by detectorists at Ilam in the Peak District in June 2003, this artefact is one of a group of enamel-decorated pans that were crafted to celebrate the wall's existence. Around its rim are inscriptions naming the four forts on the western end of Hadrian's Wall – Bowness-on-Solway, Drumburgh, Stanwix and Castlesteads – each of which is placed, we're told, "on the line of the Wall of Aelius". The pan even name-checks its likely owner, one Draco. To the veterans who took such items home – of which Draco was perhaps one – the sequence of garrison names recalled a route endlessly marched from the Solway flatlands west of Carlisle to the Pennine hills.

Beneath the text are swirling polychrome enamel circles, a decorative technique originating in northern Europe but favoured by military consumers. Not even the loss of the pan's handle and base can detract from its beauty. And you can see it for yourself at one of the three museums at which it is on rotational display: Tullie House Museum (Carlisle), the Potteries Museum (Stoke-on-Trent) and the British Museum.

***Sally Worrell**, national finds adviser, UCL*



A sheet gold plaque (left) and a section from the cheek plate of a helmet (below) discovered in the Staffordshire Hoard, which showcased the early Anglo-Saxons' artistic exuberance

5 Anglo-Saxons seize the spotlight

The discovery of the Staffordshire Hoard propelled early medieval England into the nation's consciousness

Some finds add a few brushstrokes to our understanding of a historical period. Others, like the Staffordshire Hoard, change the picture completely.

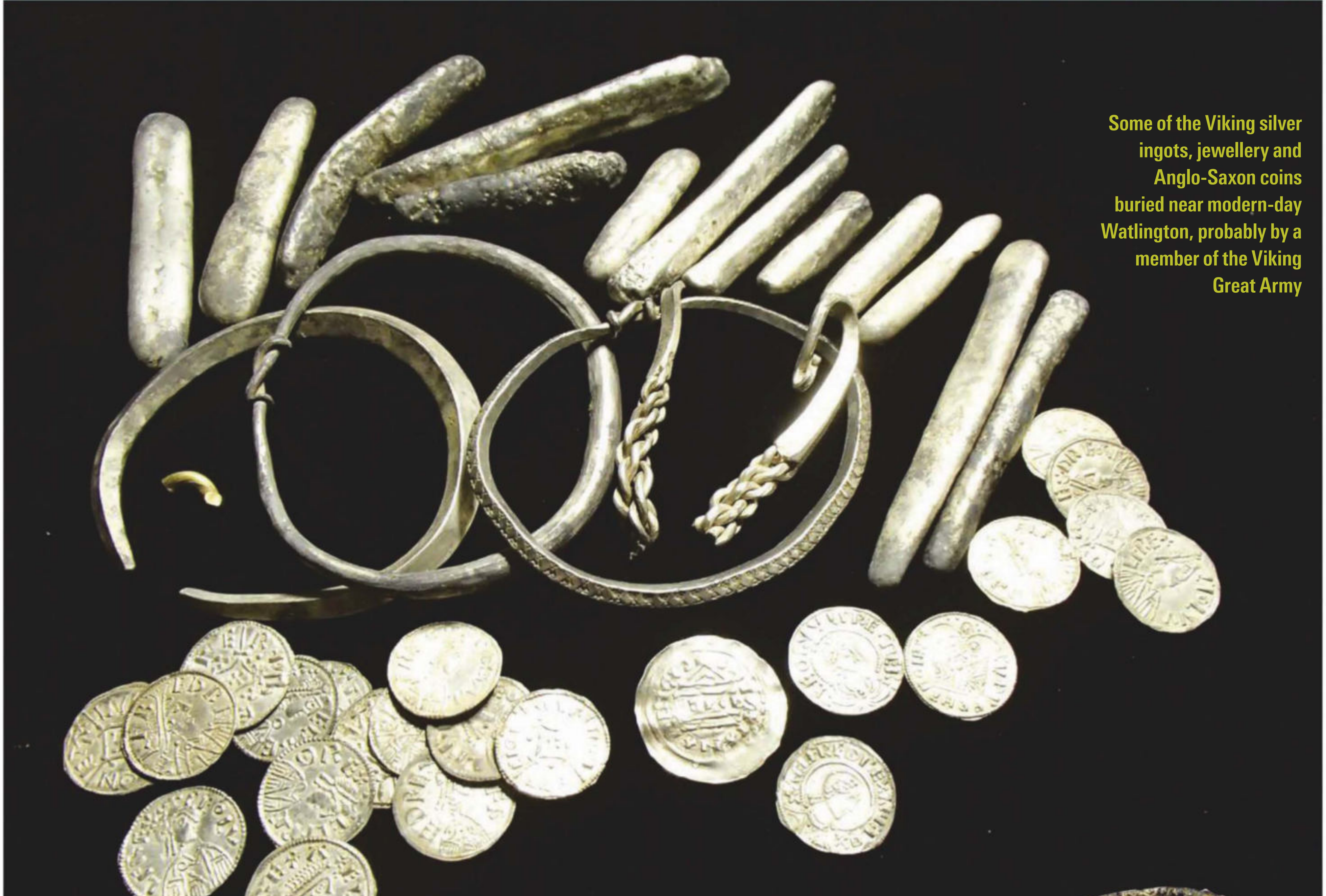
Detectorist Terry Herbert's discovery of 4,600 fragments of seventh-century war-gear and other objects in a field near the village of Hammerwich in 2009 was the find of a lifetime. But it was a lot more than that. It turned the early Anglo-Saxon period, swathes of which have long been shrouded in obscurity, into a topic of genuine public interest. Suddenly – thanks to exquisite pieces such as a possible representation of a Jewish priest's crown, and the Staffordshire helmet, pieced together from hundreds of precious fragments – the world saw the craftsmanship and sheer exuberance of Anglo-Saxon art.

The Staffordshire Hoard – parts of which are on display at the Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery and the Potteries Museum, Stoke-on-Trent – raised many questions, of course. Was it buried as loot, or hidden for security? Could it have been a ritual offering? Why is feminine jewellery – the gold object most commonly recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme among seventh-century finds – entirely absent?

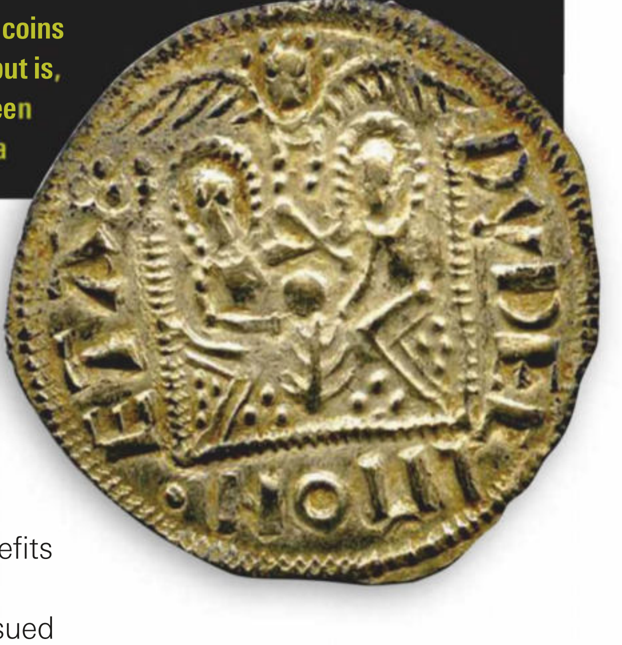
Attempting to get to the bottom of these puzzles will only increase our fascination with this remarkable find, and the period in English history that produced it.

***Kevin Leahy**, national finds adviser, PAS*

BRITISH MUSEUM-PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME



Some of the Viking silver ingots, jewellery and Anglo-Saxon coins buried near modern-day Watlington, probably by a member of the Viking Great Army



One of the 13 'Two Emperors' coins found in the hoard. It copies a Roman coin but is, perhaps, intended to show an alliance between Alfred and Ceolwulf II of Mercia

6 Alfred the Great strikes back

The Watlington Hoard is evidence of the struggles between Vikings and Anglo-Saxons as the tide turned in Alfred's favour

The late ninth century was a time of great tumult in Britain. In England, the Viking 'Great Army' conquered the kingdoms of Northumbria and East Anglia, and seized control of much of Mercia. Then, in the mid-870s, it turned its sights on Wessex. Even the soon-to-be great King Alfred was forced into hiding on the Somerset Levels.

But, in 878, Alfred emerged from Athelney, defeating the Vikings at the battle of Edington. The Viking leader, Guthrum, sued for peace with Alfred and agreed to leave Wessex. After spending the winter of 878/79 in Cirencester, the Vikings headed to East Anglia to settle, probably taking a route along the Icknield Way in southern Oxfordshire. It was here, near to the small town of Watlington, that detectorist James Mather made a discovery that sheds light on this moment in history.

The find, known as the Watlington Hoard, is made up of Viking silver jewellery and ingots, plus 203 silver coins. It is the first large Viking hoard from the Upper Thames Valley, made even more significant by the presence of the coins. These consist mainly of rare pennies of Alfred the Great (reigned 871–99) and Ceolwulf II of Mercia (874–c79), produced using the same design for both kings.

Two-hundred of the pennies belong to two joint designs: the Cross-and-Lozenge (of which there are 187) and the Two Emperors (of which there are 13). Depicting two rulers below an angel, it is the latter design, copying a late Roman gold coin, that has attracted the most attention. But both types essentially suggest the same thing: a recognition of the benefits of economic cooperation.

Wessex and Mercia had issued coins using shared designs since the 860s, an alliance that the coins show continued under Alfred and Ceolwulf, even if historical documents said otherwise.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (written in Wessex from the 890s) described Ceolwulf as "a foolish king's thegn", a puppet of the Vikings. Historians now see him differently, accepting him as the king of the Mercians, with the coinage an important part of his rehabilitation. The coins indicate that Alfred and Ceolwulf's pennies were probably struck in large numbers, too, so this was no fleeting alliance.

This is not the only way in which the coins are important: differences in inscriptions, the style of the coin design and the names of moneyers reveal a great deal about the chronology of the coin production and the mints where they were struck, probably at Canterbury, London and Winchester, with another in Mercia.

The Watlington Hoard (now on display at the Ashmolean Museum) may bring to light new knowledge about Alfred and Ceolwulf, but the chances are it was buried by a member of the Viking Great Army as it made that journey to East Anglia. In fact, the hoard may have been part of the peace deal struck between Alfred's Wessex and Guthrum's Vikings following the great clash at Edington.

John Naylor, *national finds adviser, Ashmolean Museum*

BRITISH MUSEUM-PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME/PA-IMAGES

7 The price of change

The Chew Valley Hoard is a time capsule from those turbulent few years when William the Conqueror's new regime was at its most vulnerable

The Norman Conquest is one of the most famous examples of regime change in medieval Europe. But how great was the rupture that followed William the Conqueror's victory at Hastings? Following the discovery of 2,581 silver pennies and halfpennies in Somerset last year, we are now in a better position to answer this much-debated question.

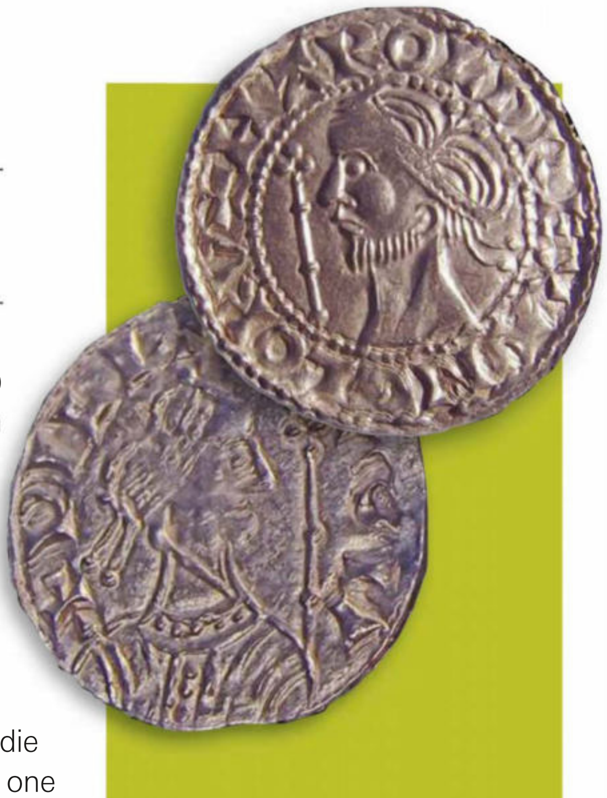
Buried in the chaotic early years of William's reign, the Chew Valley Hoard is the largest ever recovered from this period in English history. Its contents, divided between Harold II's only issue and the first coin-type of William's reign, increase the number of coins available for study hugely, doubling those for Harold and increasing by five times those for William.

The size of the find is key to our understanding of the transition from Anglo-Saxon to Norman rule. With such a large sample size we'll be able to compare England's coinage each side of the Conquest – where it was minted, the names of the moneyers who produced them, the numbers of dies used – and explore exactly how radical change was after 1066.

As well as opening a window on the late 1060s, the Chew Valley Hoard also threw up some surprises – including two coins using the obverse (heads) of one of Harold II's coins and the reverse (tails) of one of William's. Using coin dies from different issues (known as 'muling') is a rare find in this period, and might reflect a paucity of new dies or an attempt to (illegally) cut costs when William's issue was introduced, by reusing an old die. Another coin reuses a die of Edward the Confessor, with one of William's dies.

These oddities aside, the Chew Valley hoard provides a remarkable glimpse into a turbulent moment which had long-reaching effects on England's state and society.

John Naylor



The Chew Valley hoard contained more than 2,500 coins minted for Harold II (top) and William the Conqueror. It may have been buried during the insecurity and insurrection following the Norman Conquest

8 All the world in a cup

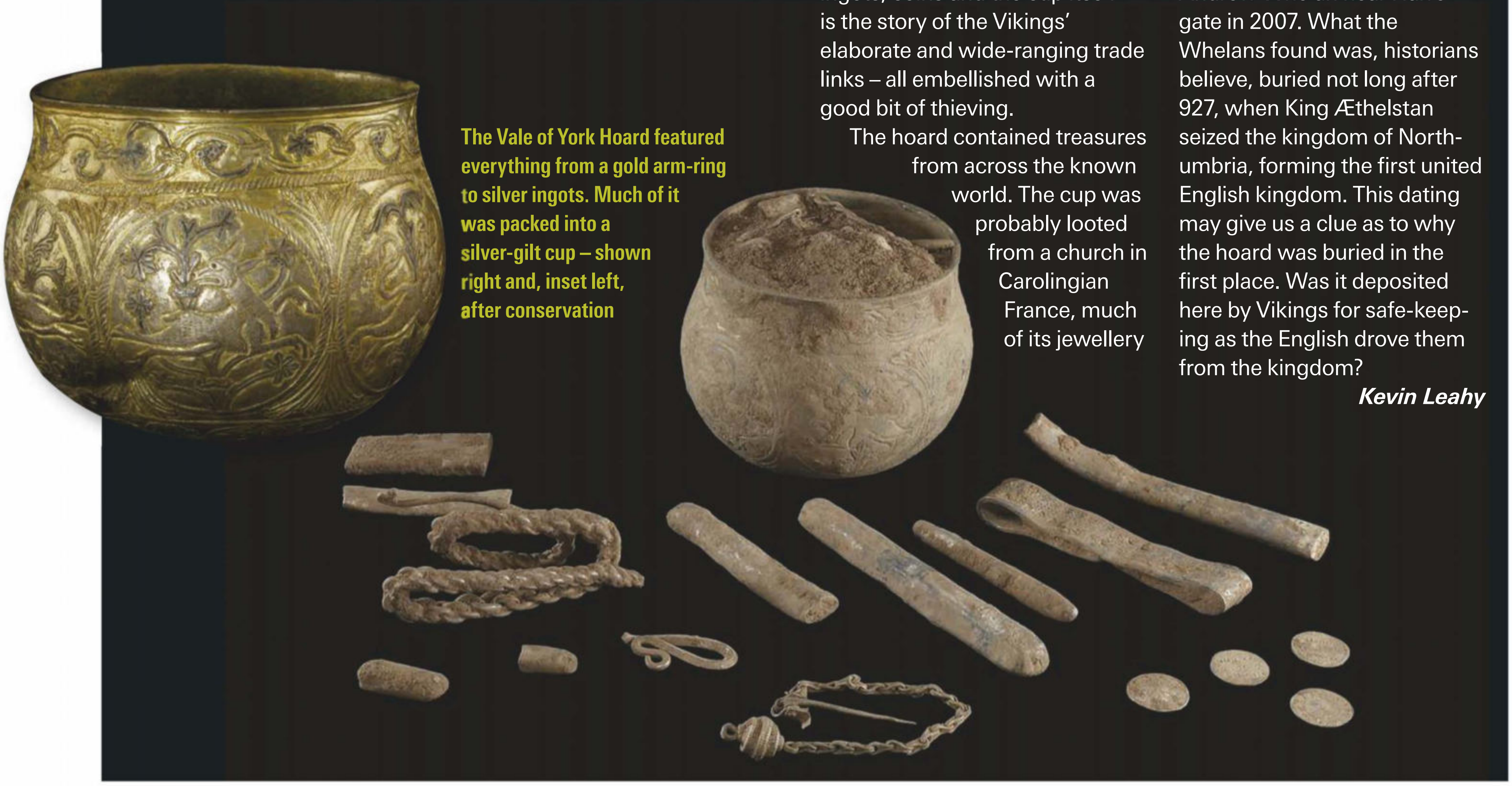
Viking treasures from Ireland to Afghanistan were hidden – possibly from advancing Anglo-Saxons – in the Vale of York Hoard

Incredibly, much of the Vale of York Hoard fits into its little silver-gilt cup. Yet this is a treasure that punches way above its weight. That's because, contained within its gold and silver arm-rings, jewellery, ingots, coins and the cup itself is the story of the Vikings' elaborate and wide-ranging trade links – all embellished with a good bit of thieving.

The hoard contained treasures from across the known world. The cup was probably looted from a church in Carolingian France, much of its jewellery came from Ireland – and, as for its 600 or more Anglo-Saxon, Carolingian and Islamic silver coins, they were minted as far afield as Afghanistan.

The hoard was found by father and son David and Andrew Whelan near Harrogate in 2007. What the Whelans found was, historians believe, buried not long after 927, when King Æthelstan seized the kingdom of Northumbria, forming the first united English kingdom. This dating may give us a clue as to why the hoard was buried in the first place. Was it deposited here by Vikings for safe-keeping as the English drove them from the kingdom?

Kevin Leahy



The Vale of York Hoard featured everything from a gold arm-ring to silver ingots. Much of it was packed into a silver-gilt cup – shown right and, inset left, after conservation

GETTY IMAGES/PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME

9 Mud, blood and martyrdom

The depth of devotion to the cult of Thomas Becket was revealed by a find on the banks of the Thames

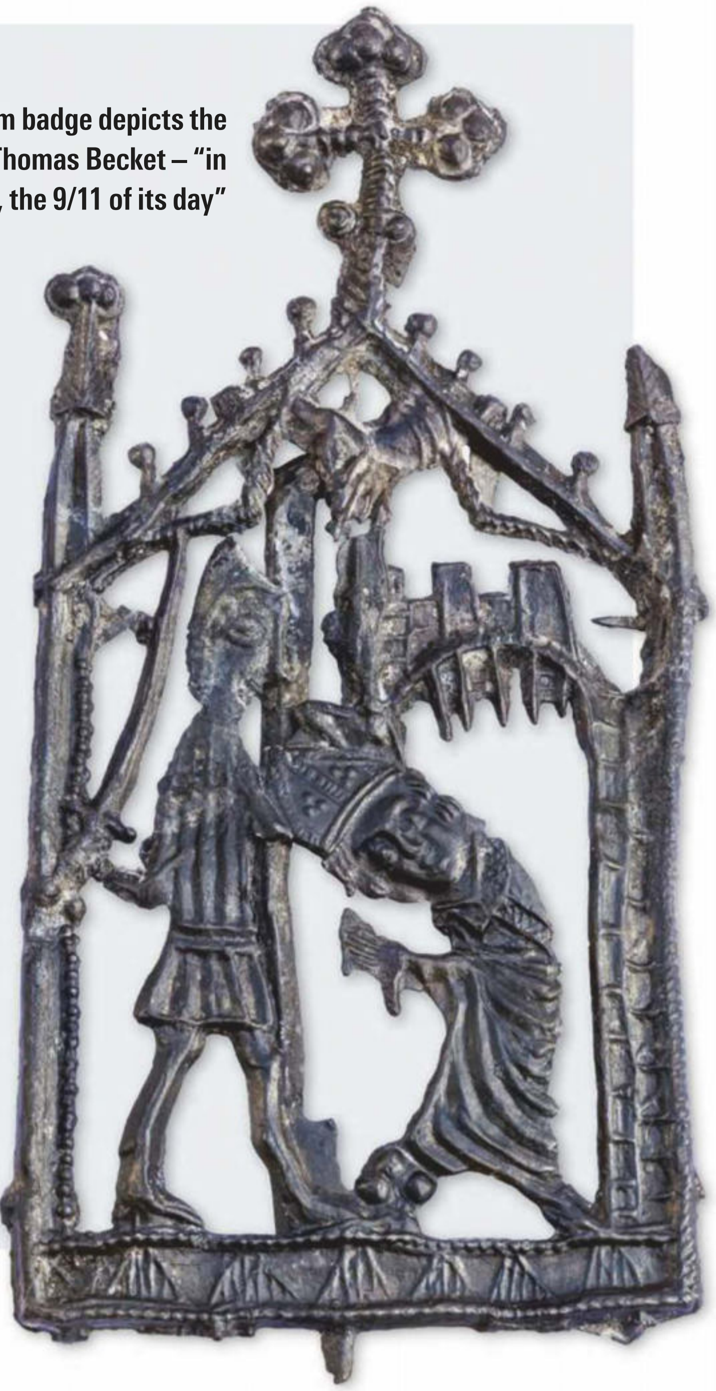
In 2016, Tony Thira was mudlarking along the Thames foreshore when he chanced upon a medieval badge, seemingly of St Thomas (Becket) of Canterbury. On the face of it, there was nothing particularly extraordinary about his find: pilgrim badges are not excessively rare discoveries, and the Portable Antiquities Scheme has recorded many souvenirs associated with St Thomas. But the pristine condition in which this fragile badge emerged from the Thames mud – where it had lain for perhaps 700 years – marked it out as special.

The badge, which probably dates to the 14th or 15th century, appears to depict Becket's murder in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170. It's believed that four knights struck the blows that sent Becket to his grave, though the badge has room for just one – and, if you look closely, you can see the hand of God descending over the archbishop at the point of his martyrdom.

The killing of such a high-ranking ecclesiastic in his own cathedral, on the apparent orders of King Henry II, shocked all of Christendom – it was, in many ways, the 9/11 of its day. As Geoffrey Chaucer recounts in his *Canterbury Tales*, pilgrimage to holy places became a phenomenon in the Middle Ages, with people of all backgrounds travelling sometimes great distances. Soon the cult of Becket was drawing hundreds of pilgrims to the spot where he died.

Pilgrim badges are a testament to this practice. They were not only proof of pilgrimage, but people believed that they turned into a kind of lucky charm once they'd touched holy relics. Illustrations show people wearing badges on caps, but they might have been worn anywhere. Some were fixed to books, others hung up around the home. The basic principle was that if you touched the badge its spiritual qualities would be passed on to you too.

Michael Lewis


The pilgrim badge depicts the killing of Thomas Becket – "in many ways, the 9/11 of its day"

10 The mark of death?

How a discarded boar badge helped inspire a rethink on Richard III's final moments

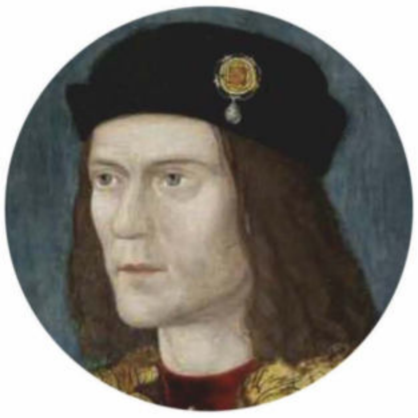
Richard III has been associated with the emblem of a boar for centuries – and not always in a way the Yorkist king would have enjoyed. In his play of 1593, *Richard III*, William Shakespeare has the Earl of Richmond declare the king a "wretched, bloody, and usurping boar, That spoiled your summer fields and fruitful vines." It was a description that helped secure Richard's place in infamy.

Shakespeare may have applied more than a little artistic licence when describing Richard's life, but there's no denying that this animal was indeed the king's emblem. It is known that, in 1483, boar badges were made for Richard's coronation and also the investiture of his son, Edward, as Prince of Wales.

A number of boar-shaped objects, as well as items with the boar-motif, have over the years been recorded with the Portable Antiquities Scheme. None, however, are more significant – or evocative – than a silver-gilt livery badge in the form of a boar found at the site of the battle of Bosworth, where Richard so famously lost his life.

Although broken, the badge (which is now on display in the Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre) must have been lost on the spot by a member of the king's personal household. It was discovered during a metal-detecting survey to better place the location of the battle – and (along with other evidence as part of the 2005–09 survey) it has moved the epicentre of the battle about 3km from where previously thought, and led to a reassessment of the course of the clash. Indeed, some people now think that the badge identifies the actual spot where King Richard perished, but that might be reading too much into it!

Michael Lewis


It's believed that the Bosworth boar badge was dropped by a member of Richard III's personal household not far from the spot where the king died in battle

PORTABLE ANTIQUES SCHEME/BRIDGEMAN

WEBSITE To find out more about the **Portable Antiquities Scheme**, and the Code of Practice for Responsible Metal-detecting, go to *finds.org.uk*

WATCH You can catch up with the BBC Four comedy series **Detectorists**, starring Mackenzie Crook and Toby Jones, on BBC iplayer. Go to *bbc.co.uk/iplayer*

With thanks to Gareth Williams, Neil Wilkin and Richard Abdy

SUMMER
READING!
2020
KING V
PILGRIMS
REFUGEES

TUDORS
B
WR
ANCIENT EGYPT
HISTORY A-Z
FEMINISM
KING DYNASTY
SOCIAL CHANG
BLACK
RIGH
KING
LAURIE AVON

It may be a summer like no other, but whether you are on a beach, or, more likely, still at home, it's always a good time to catch-up on some of the latest, and greatest, history books. Over the following pages, a group of historians and authors select their favourite biographies, era-spanning epics and much else besides

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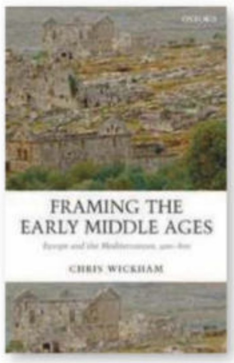
COMPILED BY **ELLIE CAWTHORNE**

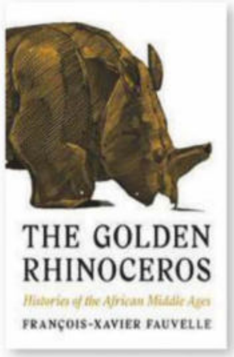
ILLUSTRATION BY **LAURIE AVON**

Hannah Skoda on the medieval world

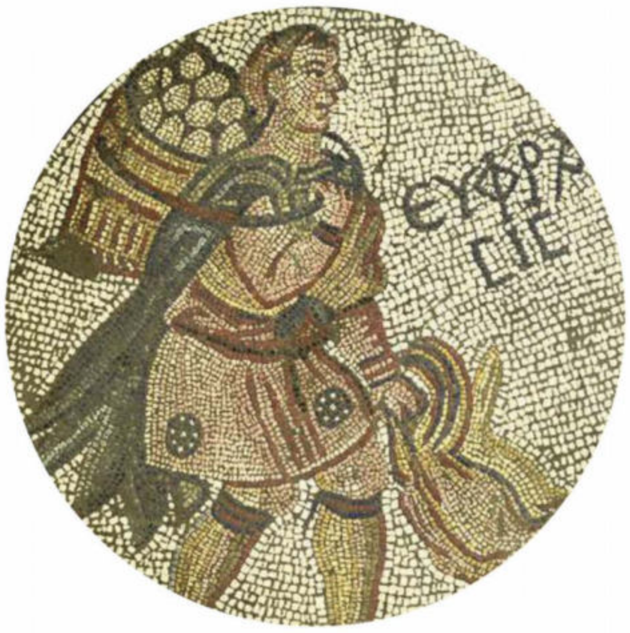


Medieval history is challenging, exciting and thought-provoking because it's a constantly evolving field, with a cast of characters that are seemingly so recognisable, and yet inhabit such a different world.

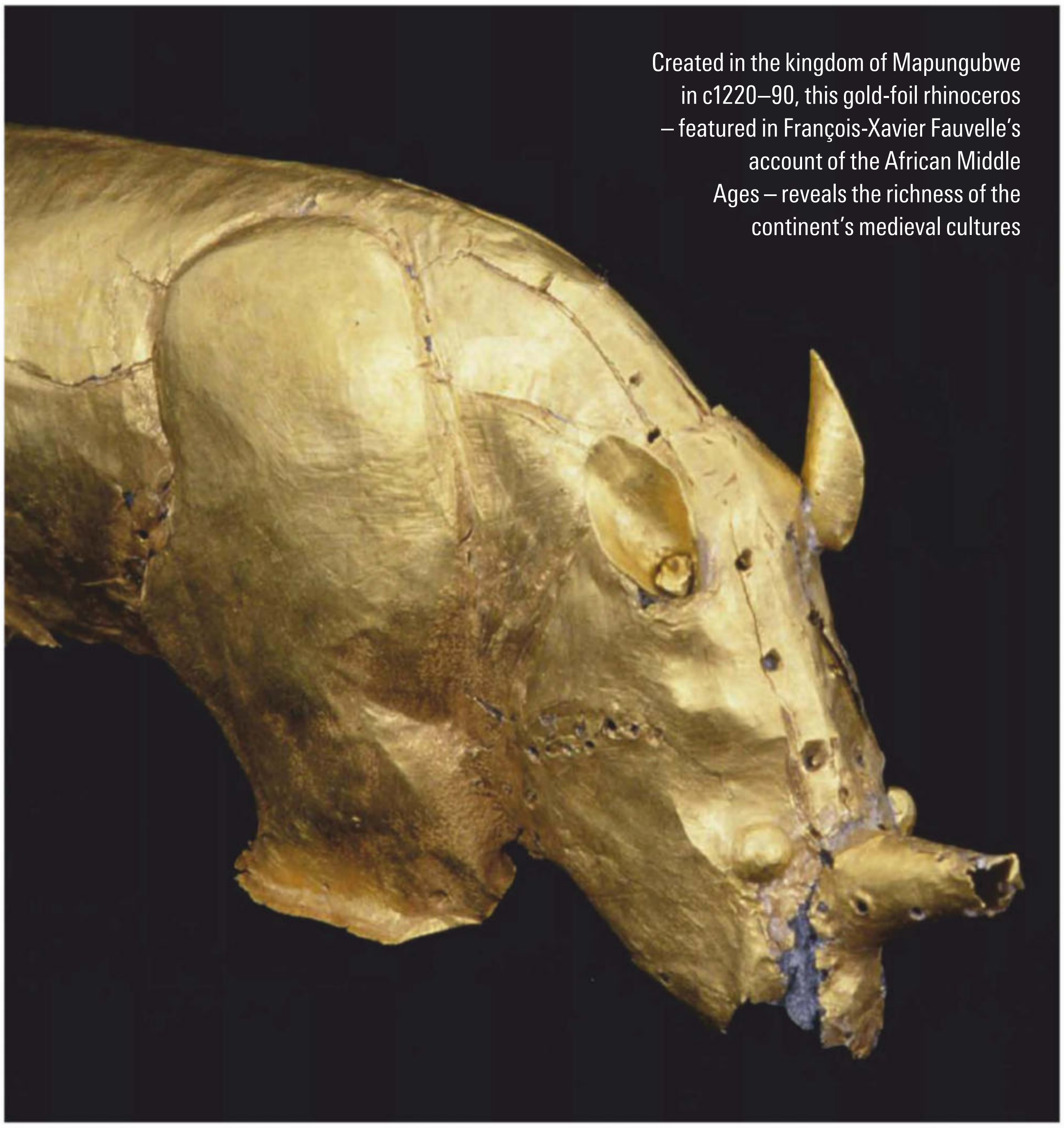
My first recommendation for reading about this era is Chris Wickham's **Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800** (2006). This is a huge book, full of fascinating insights into early medieval society. Wickham is interested in people right across the social spectrum, as well as the bigger social and economic structures through which individuals experienced life and related to one another. He writes about the dramatic period following the fall of the Roman empire, and covers a vast geographical sweep.



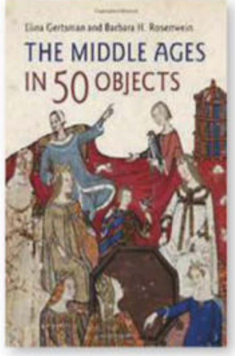
My second choice moves away from Europe entirely. François-Xavier Fauvelle's **The Golden Rhinoceros: Histories of the African Middle Ages** (2018) tells the story of medieval Africa. Beautifully written, it offers an exciting set of insights into African societies, from the birth of Islam in the seventh century up to the 15th century. Fauvelle reminds us of the rich and diverse nature of African civilisations in this period, from South Africa's sophisticated royalty to the commercial and cultural crossroads of the Sahara. He draws on an incredible array of sources, including archaeology and material objects.



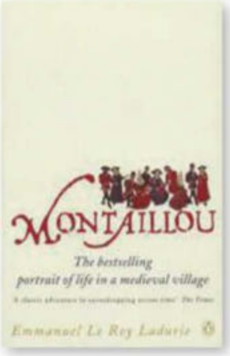
A peasant carries a basket of eggs in this Byzantine mosaic. Chris Wickham's book explores the full breadth of people's experiences in the early medieval period



Created in the kingdom of Mapungubwe in c1220–90, this gold-foil rhinoceros – featured in François-Xavier Fauvelle's account of the African Middle Ages – reveals the richness of the continent's medieval cultures



Artefacts form the focus of my next choice: Elina Gertsman and Barbara Rosenwein's **The Middle Ages in 50 Objects** (2018). In recent years, medieval historians have become more attuned to the importance of objects that provide us with a tangible connection to the past: in societies where literacy rates fluctuated, people experienced objects in powerful and emotive ways. Rosenwein and Gertman's choices range globally, from a sixth-century Egyptian pilgrim's flask to a 12th-century dragon's head made from walrus ivory. These extraordinary objects remind us of the sheer strangeness of this world, and the volume is beautifully illustrated.



My final nomination is a much older book: Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's **Montaillou** (1975). It's based on the inquisitorial trials of a group of Cathar heretics in the early 14th century in the foothills of the Pyrenees. The beliefs of the heretics are intriguing in themselves, but Le Roy Ladurie also recognises the potential of the sources to tell us about the everyday lives of medieval peasants – what they ate, who was having an affair with whom, how they felt about the beauty of nature and so on. It's a very moving read.

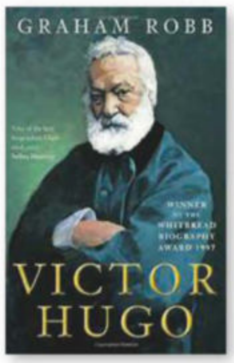
Hannah Skoda is fellow and tutor in medieval history at St John's College, Oxford

UP MAPUNGUBWE MUSEUM/BRIDGEMAN

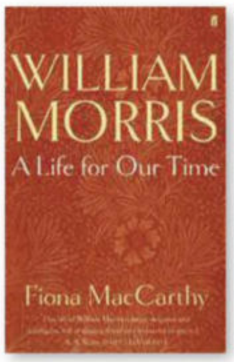
Mark Bostridge on biographies

THE INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER
MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
ANTONIA FRASER
50th ANNIVERSARY EDITION

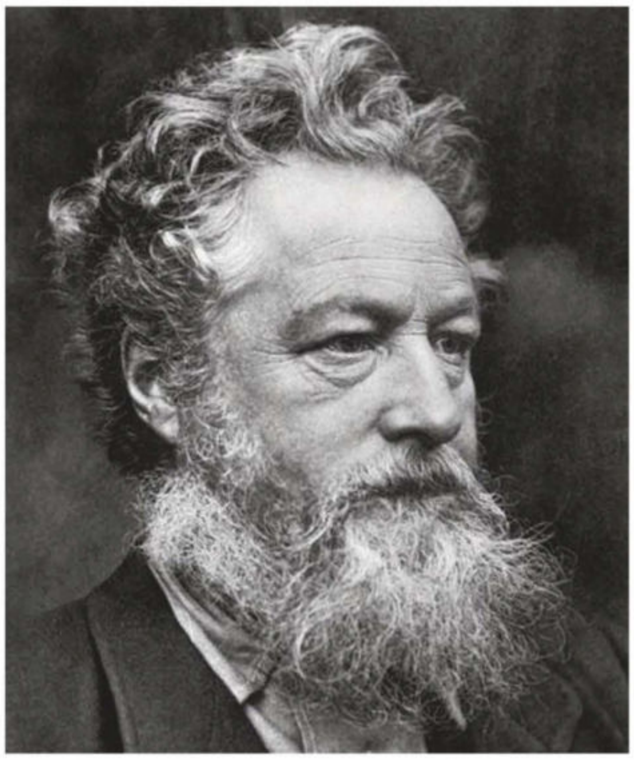
More than half a century after it was first published, **Mary, Queen of Scots** by Antonia Fraser (1969) is still the best biography of the ill-fated Scottish queen. It is vivid, dramatic, explosive (literally, of course, with the murder of Darnley at Kirk o' Field) and leads inexorably to that tragic end on the block. Fraser has an eye for Mary's adversarial strengths and flamboyant miscalculations. Countless biographers, historians and dramatists have portrayed the rivalry between Mary and Elizabeth I, but this interpretation remains the most compelling and convincing.



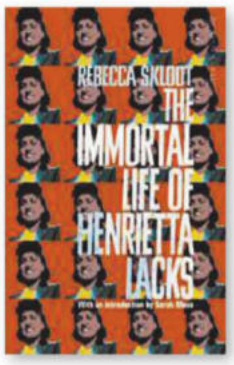
Victor Hugo by Graham Robb (1998) is a magnificent tour de force. Conveyed in Robb's inimitable style, it's full of wit, irony and unflagging energy. Any biographer of Hugo needs as much energy as they can muster to chart the life of a prodigious character who was not only the most famous writer of his age, but also a revolutionary, politician, campaigner, and visionary. The contradictions of his successive political positions are laid bare, from the militant monarchist of the July Monarchy to the revolutionary socialist in the Paris Commune era. And for the first time, an unflinching eye is turned on Hugo's manifold sexual misdemeanours, a man who notched up each conquest, from grand ladies to servant girls, in his notebooks.



I would also nominate Fiona MacCarthy's **William Morris: A Life for Our Time** (1994). MacCarthy, who died earlier this year, was the outstanding modern biographical writer about the visual arts. Her subjects ranged from Eric Gill to Edward Burne-Jones, and, most triumphantly, William Morris, the greatest artist-craftsman of the Victorian age. If you want to understand how Morris's Romantic anti-industrialism produced all those beautiful fabrics and textiles, then this book is for you. Morris emerges from MacCarthy's weaving together of the multiple threads of his life as a pioneer of socialism. He was an inspiration to generations of Labour politicians in Britain, not least to the 1945 Labour government. Clement Attlee spoke of the influence of Morris's idea of 'fellowship' in the building of the welfare state.



William Morris, who Fiona MacCarthy's "triumphant" biography reveals to be a pioneer of socialism



Another extraordinary biography I would recommend is **The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks** by Rebecca Skloot (2010). It uses careful detective work to tell the story of a woman and of the cells removed from her body without her permission, which became one of the most significant tools in the development of modern medicine. In 1951 Lacks, a poor African-American, was dying of cancer. Skloot describes Lacks' life; the story of the 'HeLa' cells, as they were called, bought and sold by the billions; and the fate of Lacks' family, who can't afford health insurance for the drugs that her cells helped to make.

Mark Bostridge's books include biographies of Vera Brittain and Florence Nightingale

GETTY IMAGES

LOOKING FORWARD

Ellie Cawthorne on books coming up in 2020

It's certainly been a strange summer for the world of publishing. But if there's one small silver lining on our current situation, it's that some of us have more time for reading than ever before. And as we move towards autumn, there's plenty for book-lovers to look forward to.

The news agenda has been dominated recently by the Black Lives Matter protests, and there's plenty of books coming up that provide vital historical background for understanding current debates. I'm especially interested to learn more about the game-changing people of colour that shaped our nation in Patrick Vernon and Angelina Osborne's **100 Great Black Britons.** Olivette Otele's **African Europeans**, revealing the long and untold history of Africans on this continent, promises to be another enlightening read.

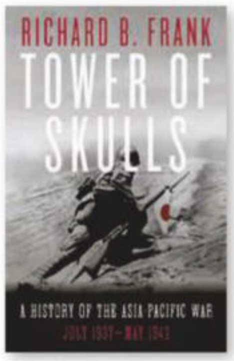
Meanwhile, the Middle Ages continues to be as popular as ever. Rosemary Horrox will be profiling one of history's most obsessed-over figures, **Richard III,** while Charles Spencer will be telling the story of **The White Ship** – the naval disaster that threw medieval England's royal dynasty into turmoil.

Moving forward a fair few centuries, Laurence Rees will explore the relationship between two tyrants that defined the 20th century in **Hitler and Stalin**, and Richard J Evans is set to investigate why so many corrosive myths continue to swirl around the Third Reich with **The Hitler Conspiracies**. For a broader examination of how conflict has shaped societal progress, look out for Margaret Macmillan's **War**.

For those interested in the history of Asia, Priya Atwal will be sharing the stories of the **Royals and Rebels** that built the Sikh empire, and Michael Wood's **The Story of China** recounts the fluctuating fortunes of one of the world's most fascinating civilisations.

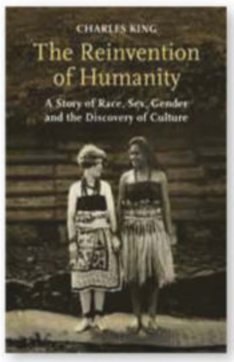
Finally, Andrew Marr's **Elizabethans** promises a lively "living history" chronicling the transformation of modern Britain since Elizabeth II's coronation.

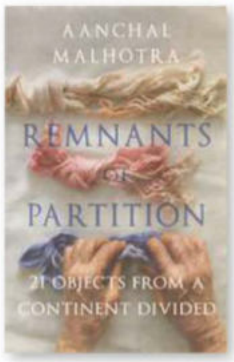
Rana Mitter on global history


RICHARD B. FRANK
TOWER OF SKULLS
A HISTORY OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC WAR
JULY 1937–MAY 1942

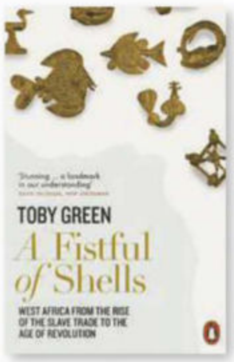
On 15 August, we will mark the 75th anniversary of VJ Day, when Japan's surrender signalled the end of the Second World War. Richard B Frank tells the story in the outstanding, wide-ranging **Tower of Skulls: A History of the Asia-Pacific War** (2020). Breaking with conventional narratives that start with the American entry into the war, Frank begins with the Japanese invasion of China in 1937 and takes the story up to the 1942 Burma campaign (two further books are planned). Frank has a humane, sure eye for detail: his account of Pearl Harbor, where "spilled oil fires flickered out and bodies bobbed until recovered" is haunting.

Our understanding of other cultures has been shaped by anthropologists, often without our being aware of it. Charles King's fascinating **The Reinvention of Humanity: A Story of Race, Sex, Gender and the Discovery of Culture** (2019) argues that it was a group of remarkable female scholars who really formed our understanding of why the world is so diverse. He covers not just the well-known Ruth Benedict, who informed western understandings of Japan, but also figures such as the Native American activist Ella Deloria. The book is as sensitive on these brilliant women's lives as it is groundbreaking on their contribution to shaping our worldview.


CHARLES KING
The Reinvention of Humanity
A Story of Race, Sex, Gender and the Discovery of Culture


AANCHAL MALHOTRA
REMNANTS OF PARTITION
21 OBJECTS FROM A CONTINENT DIVIDED

Another anniversary that will be marked in August is the 1947 Partition of India. Long known to be an event of immense trauma and violence, it's often been hard to grasp the individual stories behind it. Aanchal Malhotra's **Remnants of Partition: 21 Objects from a Continent Divided** (2019) is a revelation. As its title suggests, it tells the story of partition through 21 artefacts from the era, and the oral histories of their owners. From a sword carried for protection, to a family plaque recovered at great expense, the horror of the events is brought home in detail both exquisite and searing.


TOBY GREEN
A Fistful of Shells
WEST AFRICA FROM THE RISE OF THE SLAVE TRADE TO THE AGE OF REVOLUTION

Finally, a book that gives a riveting new perspective on African history. Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of Toby Green's **A Fistful of Shells: West Africa from the Rise of the Slave Trade to the Age of Revolution** (2019) is that which is rarely covered: the wars, trade and cultural interaction in early modern West Africa before the transatlantic slave trade took off. If you know nothing of the splendours of the Kongo, then this book will open your eyes and show the richness of African history long before Europeans arrived.

Rana Mitter's books include *Modern China: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2016)

Bronze gold-weights produced in the Ashanti region (now in Ghana) in the 17th or 18th century. Toby Green's *A Fistful of Shells* explores West Africa's rich history

KEITH BARNES/ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

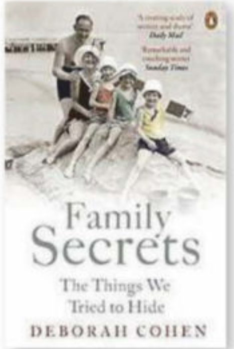
US anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston beats a Haitian drum, 1937. Author Charles King highlights the role of female scholars in shaping the field of anthropology

A bird perches on a Japanese soldier's rifle in a 1938 photo. Rana Mitter selects *Tower of Skulls*, Richard B Frank's study of the Pacific war

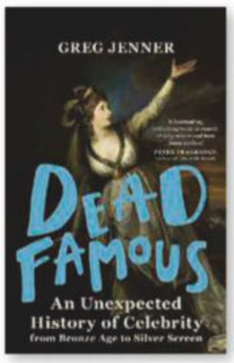
Sarah Crook on social history

Helen McCarthy
Double Lives
A HISTORY OF WORKING MOTHERHOOD

As is the case for many families, my household has spent the past few months balancing the challenges of full-time childcare with the demands of full-time employment. It comes as a relief, then, to read a book that puts these struggles in their historical context and that explores the transformation of mothers' employment from a 'social problem' in late Victorian Britain to a 'social norm' in the present day. Helen McCarthy's **Double Lives: A History of Working Motherhood** (2020) shows how the meanings attached to mothers' paid work have changed, and gives voice to what mothers have been able to articulate about their desires and needs at different moments. McCarthy shows that the pressures and pleasures of paid work are deeply bound up with ideas about what is appropriate for women and the practicalities of what is necessary.



The theme of the family, in all its knotty entanglements and quiet, painful compromises, is also found in Deborah Cohen's **Family Secrets: The Things We Tried to Hide** (2013). Arresting and profoundly engaging, Cohen shows that what we try to keep private says as much about ourselves and our world as the things we promote.


GREG JENNER
DEAD FAMOUS
An Unexpected History of Celebrity
from Bronze Age to Silver Screen

Greg Jenner's **Dead Famous: An Unexpected History of Celebrity from Bronze Age to Silver Screen** (2020) is less focused on the private, and more interested in the glitzy and sometimes grungy world of fame and the lives of those who seek it. Jenner is a witty, personable guide in a book alive with stories of resilient optimism and fierce aspiration. Indeed, it opens with actor Edmund Kean and his pregnant wife walking from Birmingham to Swansea in search of success and celebrity in the summer of 1809, tells us about his years of woe, and chronicles his ultimate triumph against the odds as he became one of the definitive Shakespearean actors of his age.

Helen McCarthy's *Double Lives* examines the experiences of working mothers, such as this woman sat at a spinning wheel with her daughter in c1912

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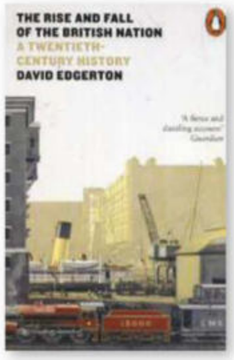
THE RISE AND FALL OF THE BRITISH NATION
A TWENTIETH-CENTURY HISTORY
DAVID EDGERTON

Woe and triumph seem to be the two poles through which British history is explained in public discourse at the moment, so David Edgerton's **The Rise and Fall of the British Nation: A Twentieth Century History** (2018) is a rewarding, argumentative intervention into discussions about nationalism, capitalism, and the 'warfare state'.

Each of these books explores themes that speak to current concerns (paid work, family, privacy, celebrity, the state). None provide ready answers, but all suggest new ways to interrogate and contextualise the issues.

Sarah Crook is lecturer in modern European social and cultural history at Swansea University

AUTHORS ON THE PODCAST

David Carpenter on medieval king Henry III

"Henry III hasn't received as much attention as other medieval kings because he's not so easy to categorise. But that's one of the main reasons to study him, and he's an absolutely fascinating king to study. And because of the amazing source material available, we can know more about Henry III than perhaps any other medieval monarch. The sources paint a picture of Henry as a man of great piety and a connoisseur of art, but also someone with a sense of humour."

Nicola Cornick on the mysterious death of Tudor noblewoman Amy Robsart

"I don't think we can ever get away from Amy's end, the sadness of her death, and the fact that the mystery will probably never be solved. But I hope that in my book I've placed more emphasis on what happened before that and on Amy in her own right. Although she is often overshadowed by her husband, Robert Dudley, Amy deserves to be more than a woman in the footnotes."

Ghee Bowman on Indian soldiers at Dunkirk

"Alongside their work getting supplies to the front lines, the Indian Contingent were interacting with French civilians all the time. They were known for singing folklore songs, drinking syrup in the cafes and doing stunts on the back of mules. There's an amazing photo of Indian Contingent soldiers dancing for French villagers, which is possibly the first time that bhangra had been performed in France."

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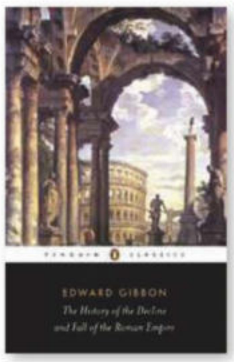
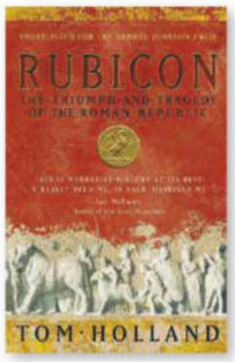
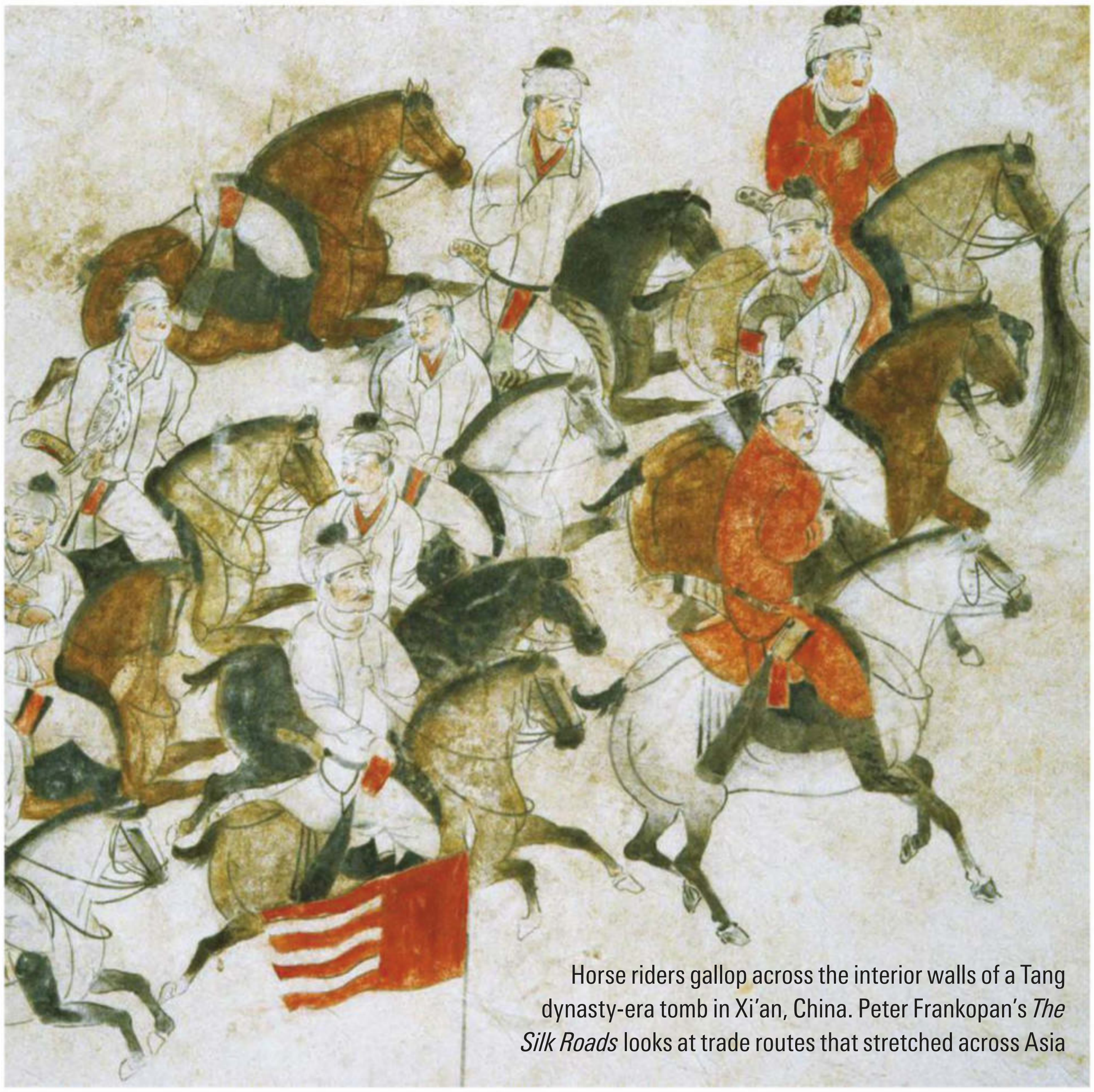
Catherine Nixey on the ancient world



The History of the Decline and Fall of The Roman Empire by Edward Gibbon (1776–88) is a work of awesome erudition and towering intellect. When it was first published, the English aristocracy therefore welcomed it with their usual reverence for all things intellectual. Or, as the Duke of Gloucester supposedly said: "Another damned, thick, square book! Always scribble, scribble, scribble! Eh! Mr Gibbon?" *Decline and Fall* might be damned big, but it's also damnably brilliant: Gibbon combined the mind of a scholar with the effortless wit of a good dinner-party companion. The Catholic church was less amused, and popped his volume onto their Index of Prohibited Books.

There was a period in the late 20th century when the discipline of history seemed to lose a sense of its purpose. Sure, books had all the right bits: dates and battles and emperors and whatnot. But authors seemed to have somehow forgotten that the chief purpose of books is not to be written but to be read – and that books should therefore be not merely accurate but entertaining. Enter Tom Holland, with his fabulously vivid history of the fall of the Republic, **Rubicon: the Triumph and Tragedy of the Roman Republic** (2003). Replete with eye-opening facts (a Gallic slave cost one jar of wine) and vivid vignettes of thugs hurling excrement in a street fight, this reminded us all what history could be. It's a superb book.

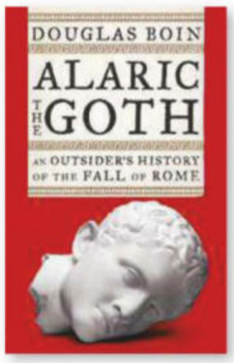




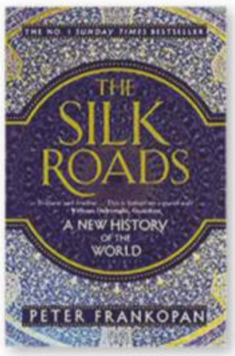
Horse riders gallop across the interior walls of a Tang dynasty-era tomb in Xi'an, China. Peter Frankopan's *The Silk Roads* looks at trade routes that stretched across Asia

An intricate design at the centre of a Roman silver plate shows fishermen hauling in their catch from waters swarming with sea creatures

Next I would nominate **Alaric the Goth: An Outsider's History of the Fall of Rome** by Douglas Boin (2020). Where you start a story from matters. As the old storytelling saying goes, start the story of a burglary inside the house and you will be on the side of the homeowner; start it outside, and you will be with the burglar. This brilliant book by Boin, an American academic, starts the story of the sack of Rome not from inside the walls of the eternal city, but outside, with Alaric the Goth. It's a great trick, superbly executed. Some books tilt the world so that you will never quite see it in the same way again, and this is definitely one.



My final recommendation has to be Peter Frankopan's **The Silk Roads: A New History of the World** (2015).



As a boy, Frankopan used to lie in bed and gaze at the map of the world next to his bed, at its countries and oceans and rivers, with their names in "urgent italics". And how puzzled he was when he went to school and found that his lessons, far from considering the history of these places to be urgent, all but ignored them.

In this marvellous and evocative book – that is not just about silk, or just about roads, but that also finds time for frankincense and furs and engaging Chinese myths about Spanish melons – he fills in some of those historical blanks.

Catherine Nixey is a journalist and classicist. She is the author of *The Darkening Age: The Christian Destruction of the Classical World* (Macmillan, 2017)

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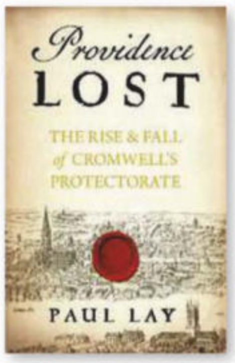
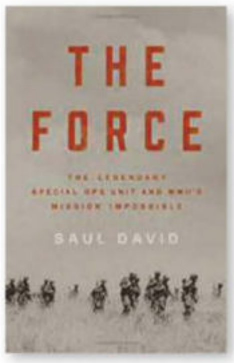
Andrew Roberts on military history

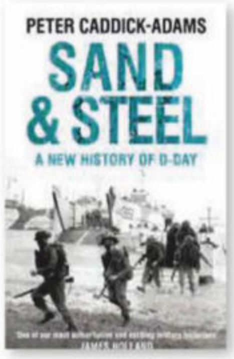


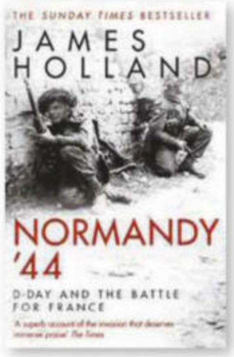
Paul Lay's **Providence Lost: The Rise and Fall of Cromwell's Protectorate** (2020) is a fascinating short history of the years of the Protectorate, which successfully answers the question of how the Roundheads – who had swept all before them at the battles of Dunbar in 1650 and Worcester in 1651 – could possibly have sunk to the disastrous position of losing power entirely within a decade, especially with so talented a leader as Oliver Cromwell at their head. Lay writes with charm and humour about Puritans, who despised both.

Sometimes subtitles let books down with their ludicrous hyperbole, but the subtitle to Saul David's **The Force: The Legendary Special Ops Unit and WWII's Mission Impossible** (2019) describes its subject perfectly. The soldiers of the First Special Service Force, who fought in Italy in 1943, fully deserved their almost mythical status, and their story is told with insight, humour and verve. How these young Americans and Canadians were trained to scale the rockface and capture the Italian hillside fort of Monte la Difensa will stay with readers for a long time.

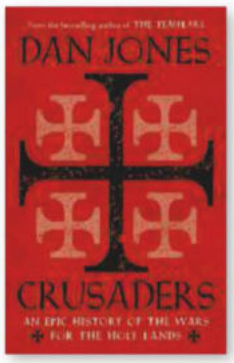


Peter Caddick-Adams's **Sand and Steel: A New History of D-Day** (2019) and James Holland's **Normandy '44: D-Day and the Battle for France** (2019) both examine the D-Day invasion and the liberation of France, and it would take a braver man than me to choose between them. Both books represent military history writing at its best: scholarly yet engaging, objective yet passionate. One of many impressive aspects of these volumes is their engagement with the German side of the struggle, as the Wehrmacht woke up to the startling fact that this was no reconnaissance force, but instead a full-scale invasion.

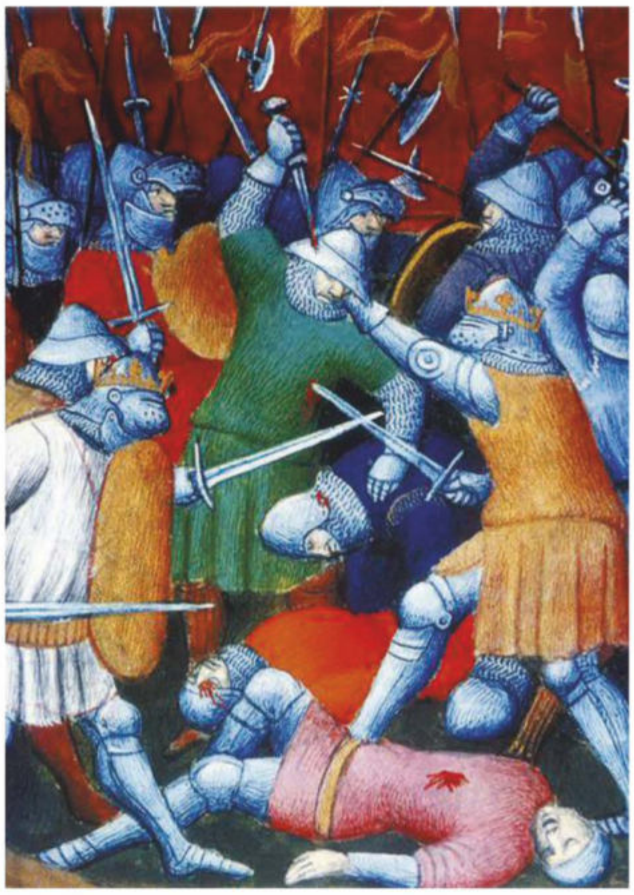




Dan Jones' book **Crusaders: An Epic History of the Wars for the Holy Lands** (2019) approaches the three centuries of the west's military involvement in the medieval Holy Land from a multicultural perspective, where some earlier histories tended to concentrate much more on the Christian invaders than the Muslims and other defenders. Jones is one of the most readable military history writers working in Britain today, and has the ability to make complex interactions – the struggle between the Mamluks and the Mongols in the mid-13th century, for example – instantly comprehensible.



Andrew Roberts' most recent book is *Leadership in War: Lessons from Those Who Made History* (Allen Lane, 2019)



Blood is shed during the Fifth Crusade (1217–21). Dan Jones' book on the medieval wars for the Holy Land "makes complex interactions comprehensible"

HELEN ATKINSON/ALAMY/NICK DAWES

YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Readers share **the history books they've been enjoying** during lockdown on our social media

I'm loving **Dynasty** by Tom Holland, and coincidentally I've got **Normandy '44** by his bro James Holland lined up next.
@Threnody2

Pompeii by Mary Beard, which I bought in the Herculaneum gift shop back when we could still travel the world.
@HarryWatson63

The Silk Roads by Peter Frankopan – an ambitious re-evaluation of world history, from ancient to modern times.
Marlena Cîşleanu

After having it sat on my bookshelf for over four years, I've finally plucked up the courage to tackle Shirer's **Rise and Fall of the Third Reich...**
Anthony Silk

How Was it for You? Women, Sex, Love and Power in the 1960s by Virginia Nicholson. Over 50 years on, we continue to face a lot of issues our parents were facing then.
@anne75114040

The excellent **Mistresses: Sex and Scandal at the Court of Charles II** by Linda Porter, which I came across while reading the May issue of *BBC History Magazine*. I thoroughly recommend **Royal Renegades** by the same author, too.
Alison Henry

Fighting the People's War by Jonathan Fennell – really fascinating history! I'm particularly interested in the war in the Far East. A great read.
Gemma Ireland

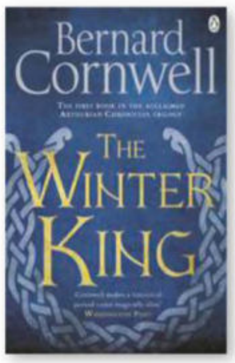
Dead Famous by Greg Jenner – it's a history of celebrity and is incredible!
@hellahistory

Linda Porter's books on royal renegades and Charles II's mistresses have kept one reader entertained in lockdown

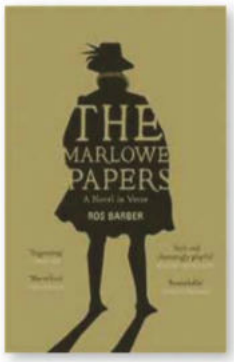
Robyn Young on historical fiction

LIBERATION
A NOVEL
Imogen Kealey

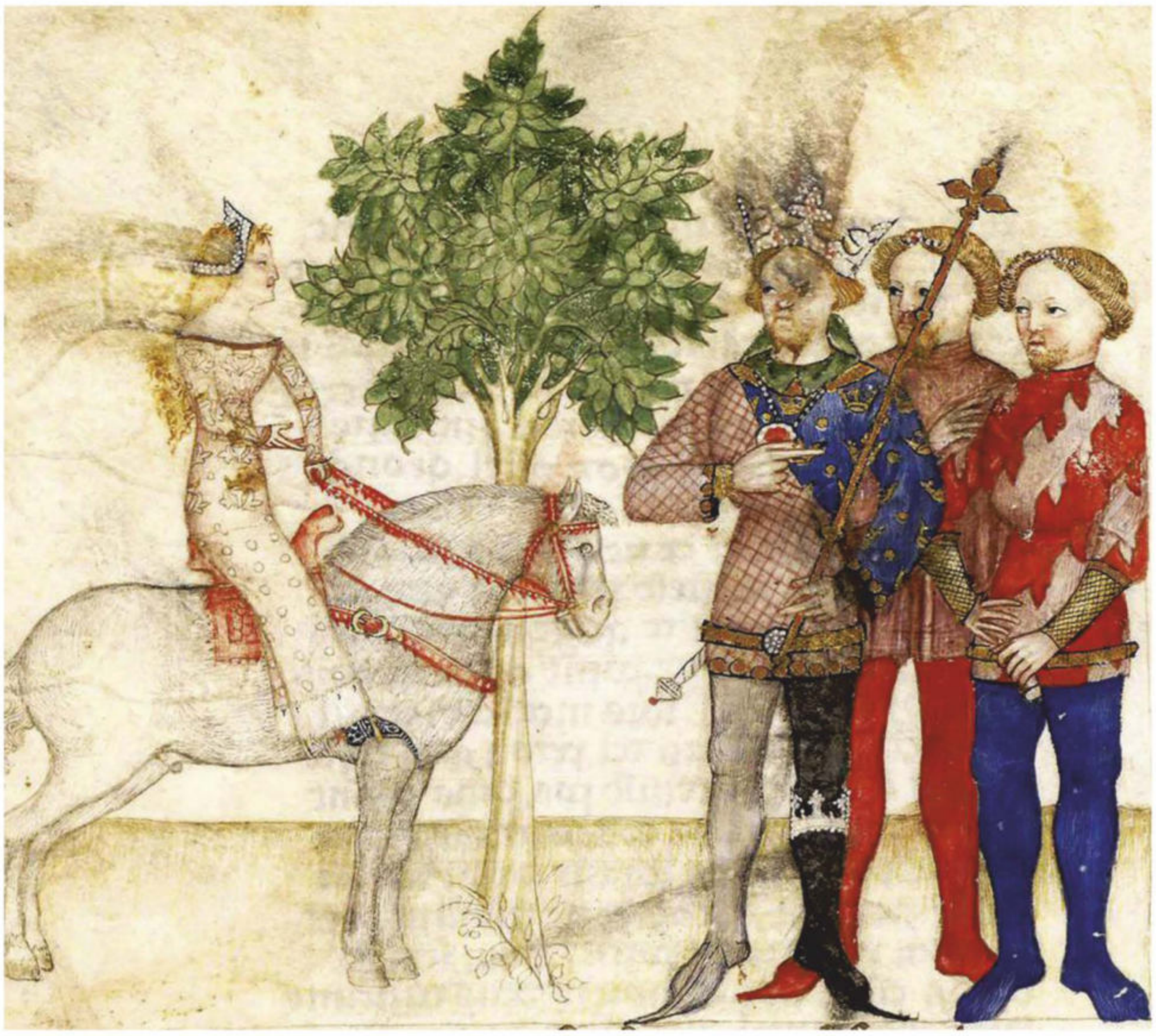
My first recommendation would be **Liberation** by Imogen Kealey (2020). It tells the extraordinary story of real-life hero and freedom fighter Nancy Wake, an Australian runaway in France. After losing her husband to the Gestapo, she escaped to Britain to train with the SOE, then returned to avenge his death at the head of 7,000 French Resistance fighters. The novel rips along at a thundering pace, propelling us, at Nancy's side, through midnight escapes and parachute drops behind enemy lines, ambushes and skirmishes. But it does so with humour and heart, never allowing us to forget the human dramas playing out in this arena of war.



The Winter King by Bernard Cornwell (1995) is the first in a superb trilogy following the story of Derfel, a captain in King Arthur's warband. Set in late fifth-century Britain, after the Romans have departed and the Saxons have come, this is a story of old gods and new religion, epic battles, courtly intrigue, betrayal and sacrifice. All the heroes you would expect are here: Arthur and Lancelot, Guinevere and Merlin. But Cornwell has taken the mythos of these eternal characters and shaped them into complex – often monstrous – human beings, while losing none of the magic of their stories. A beautifully woven spell of a book.

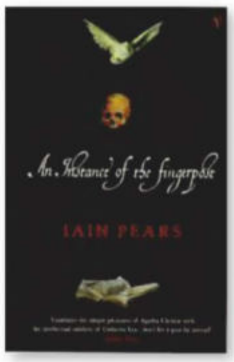


Ros Barber's **The Marlowe Papers** (2013) is also remarkable. Told in verse, it poses the question: what if Christopher Marlowe escaped death that night in Deptford and fled to live in exile, still writing – but under the new name of William Shakespeare? I was briefly nervous about reading an entire novel in verse, but from the first page you're swept in to be raced along. Barber has a rare talent in being both an outstanding poet and a terrific storyteller, with a clear eye for history and scholarship. Each page sizzles with imagery and drama.



A scene from the stories of King Arthur in a c1220 manuscript. Bernard Cornwell's novel *The Winter King* transports readers back to the age of the mythical monarch

Secret agent Nancy Wake, whose assignment with the French Resistance inspired a new novel by Imogen Kealey



Set in Oxford in the 1660s, Iain Pears's novel **An Instance of the Fingerpost** (1998) is essentially a whodunnit – but a truly terrific one. It's told in four parts, from the perspective of four characters, each of whom tells the story of the murder of an Oxford fellow and the young woman accused of the crime. But only one is telling the truth. It's one of the most intricate novels I've read, and has all the historical drama you might expect from the era, with plotters and schemers, spies and traitors around every shadowy corner. A sumptuous treat. **H**

Robyn Young is the author of the *Brethren*, *New World Rising* and *Insurrection* fiction series. Her latest novel, *Court of Wolves* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2018), is set in Medici Florence

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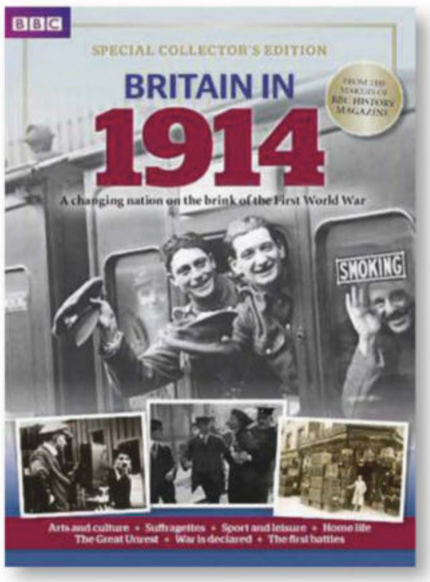
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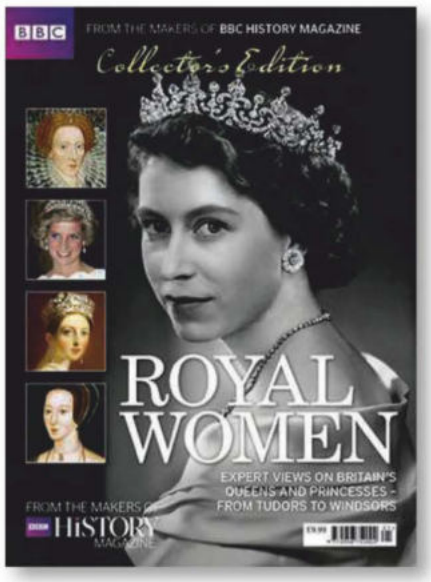
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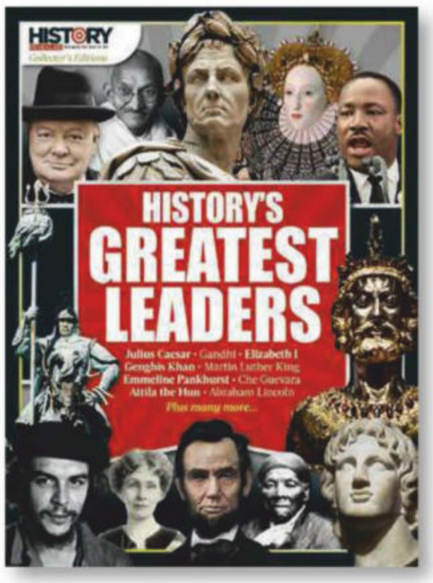
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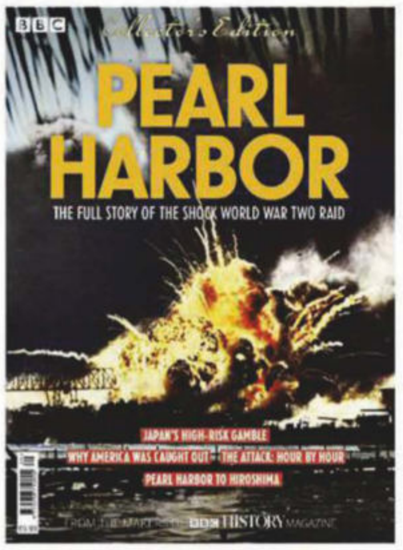
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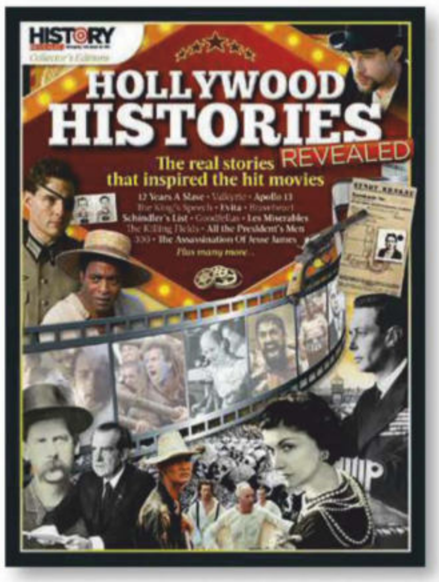
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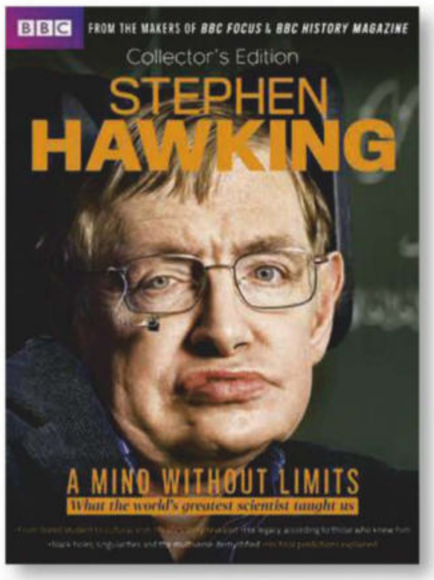
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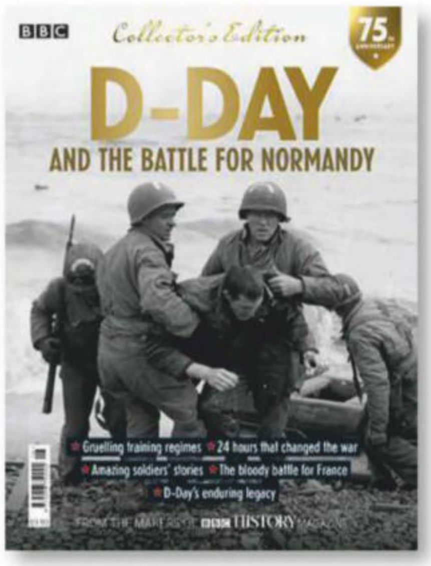
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“Magic is a really important strand of what it means to be human”

CHRIS GOSDEN tells Ellie Cawthorne about his sweeping new history of magic, which spans 40,000 years of magical beliefs across the globe, from witchcraft and astrology to shamanism

Ellie Cawthorne: Your new book surveys a vast array of magical beliefs throughout human history. How do you define magic?

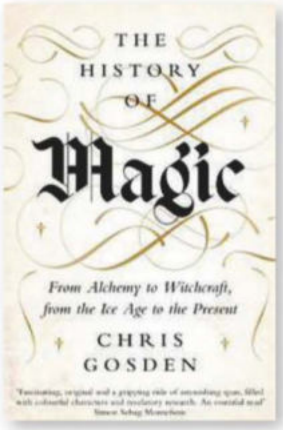
Chris Gosden: My definition of magic is a human openness to the universe. And a universe’s openness to people.

Let me give you some examples. In Oxford’s Bodleian Library, there are 80,000 astrological diagnoses, dating from between the late 16th century and about 1660. Around 60,000 people visited three astrologers and asked questions about a whole range of things, from health and career choices to lost children. The astrologers were highly methodical in how they recorded these consultations – they made a note of the question, drew an astrological chart of where various bodies were in the heavens at the time a particular event occurred, and recorded a diagnosis. In astrology, the assumption is that the movement of the planets, the moon, the sun, the stars could influence our health, our well-being, our careers.

My second example comes from my own experience. When I worked as an archaeologist in Papua New Guinea, a group of people from the village I lived in took me out to a little area in the rainforest where a bunch of stones were lying in the grass. They said: “You see these stones? At certain times, they can fly around just above the ground. And if you know how to read them, they will tell you the future.” I said that I’d love to see the stones fly, but the group responded that it wouldn’t happen if a white person was present.

In both these cases, the people involved believed that the universe was communicating with them. And if you were skilled enough – and in both cases you did have to be quite skilled – you would be able to use the information provided to work out what the universe was telling you and how it was influencing you.

Throughout history, people have used magic in its various forms to influence and address all the major questions of life and death – from birth and well-being to what happens after we die. The whole spectrum of human life is there.



The History of Magic: From Alchemy to Witchcraft, from the Ice Age to the Present
by Chris Gosden
(Viking, 512 pages, £25)

One of the central tenets of your book is about magic’s relationship to science and religion, which you describe as a triple helix. What do you mean by that?

In the 19th century, anthropologists argued that humans transitioned from a belief in magic to a belief in religion and then on to a belief in science. And you gave up the previous set of beliefs as you became more rational and more enlightened. But I don’t think that’s true. I think that through a lot of human history people have believed in a mixture of all three.

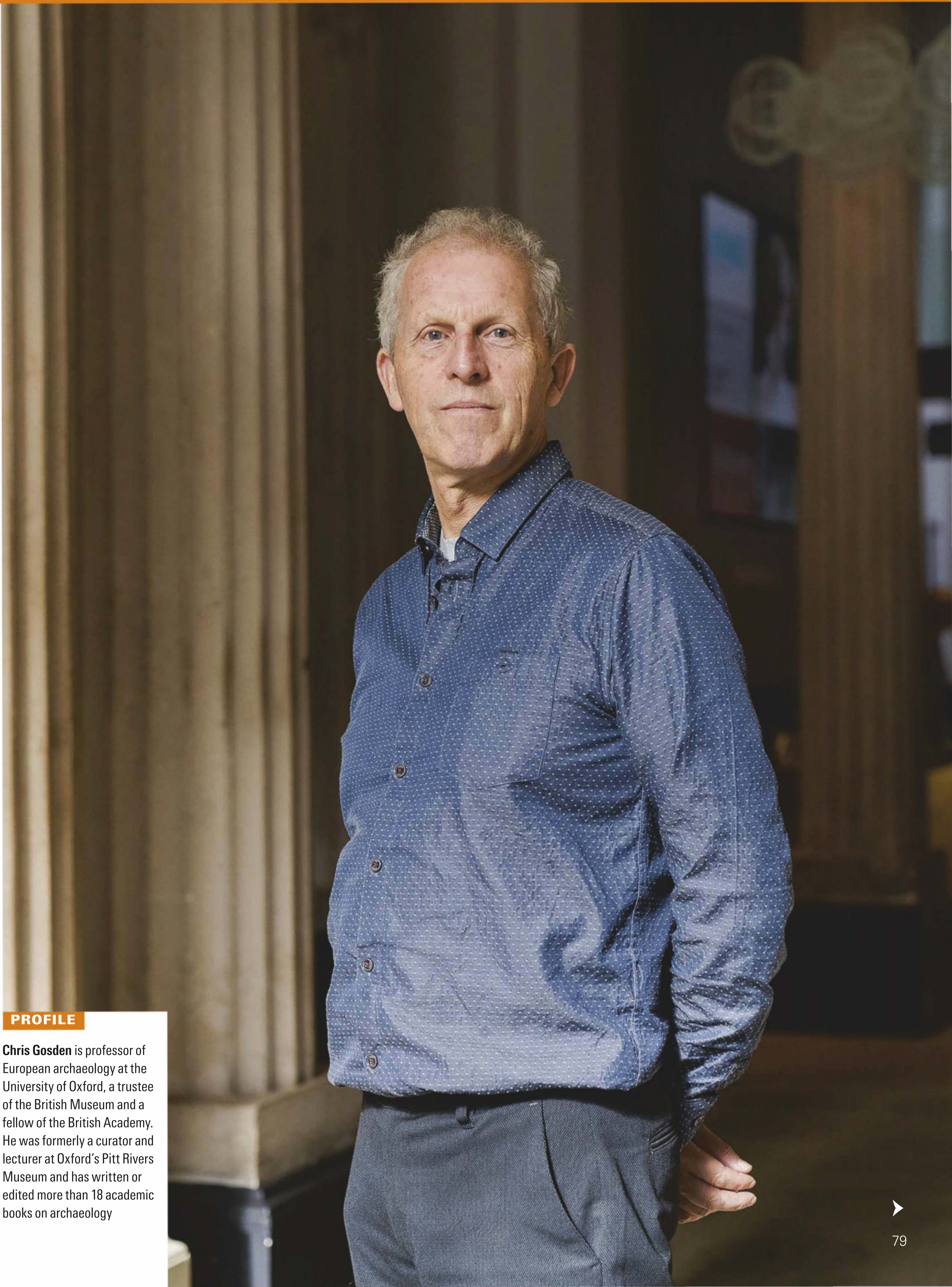
There’s no reason to choose one or two over all three of them, because they each offer different things. Religion gives us a sense of something beyond the human: a sense of awe, of something to be taken account of or worshipped. Science offers a much more objective view of the world. You try to stand back and appreciate the forces of the universe in a way that could be rendered in rational terms. Whereas magic connects you to the world in a way that makes you feel like part of the broader universe. I think all of us feel a bit of each of those things at different times. I’m not particularly religious, for instance, but there have been occasions when I can understand why people are. And certainly, you wouldn’t want to diss science – nobody would want to go back to medieval dentistry. So it’s not about choosing one option over the others – it’s about accepting a combination of the three and learning how we can use those different strands of experience and engagement in different ways.

And I don’t think there have necessarily been fine dividing lines between the three – magic, religion and science have blended into one another through history. In his seminal book *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, the historian Keith Thomas described the Catholic church as an enormous mechanism for the production of magic. He described how people would give holy water to a sick cow in the hope of curing it. That’s an example of religious beliefs being mixed together with magical beliefs.

The same goes for science. Take the astrologers I discussed earlier. They were deadly serious about what they were doing – treating their diagnoses almost as a medical doctor would. And there’s no hint that these astrologers were practising their skills secretly. One was a vicar making money on the side. People didn’t have the same rigid categories we do today – they didn’t worry about whether they were practising magic or practising science.

You suggest that as well as highlighting our connection to the universe, magical beliefs place an emphasis on human agency and actions. How so?

There’s a group of people in central Africa called the Azande, who believe that all accidents and deaths occur due to witchcraft. A famous analogy used to describe the Azande’s relationship with witchcraft tells of someone sitting under a granary up on stilts, when the granary falls over and crushes them to death. The Azande understood that the granary had fallen down because the legs were rotten. But their question was *why* it had fallen down when that particular person was underneath it. They would believe that it was a person who had caused



© ALECSANDRA RALUCA DRAGOI / GUARDIAN / EYEVINE

PROFILE

Chris Gosden is professor of European archaeology at the University of Oxford, a trustee of the British Museum and a fellow of the British Academy. He was formerly a curator and lecturer at Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum and has written or edited more than 18 academic books on archaeology this accident to happen – not by pushing over the granary, but by using a spell. For the Azande, seeing incidents like this as a result of witchcraft – and therefore human actions – was an important way of learning about tensions within their community.

What do you think has led to some societies embracing magic, while others have denigrated or rejected it?
It's broadly western society that has denigrated it. Nineteenth-century thinkers argued that western society was moving towards rationalism and an empirical understanding of the world. As such, magic was seen as irrational and primitive. To become modern was to give up magic. But I think that the real antagonism towards magic is relatively recent and relatively historically unusual. It's only in the last couple of centuries in Europe that magic received a really bad press and was driven underground. And even then it was embraced by the counter-culture. People like Aleister Crowley turned to magic because it offered a way to invert the values of polite society.

I think that part of the reason that we're quite down on magic now is because it's become associated with black magic – curses intended to do people harm or cause something bad to happen. But actually, magic has more often been used for positive purposes than negative. A lot of magic is protective of people and animals. It's to do with beneficial transformations, like getting plants to grow.

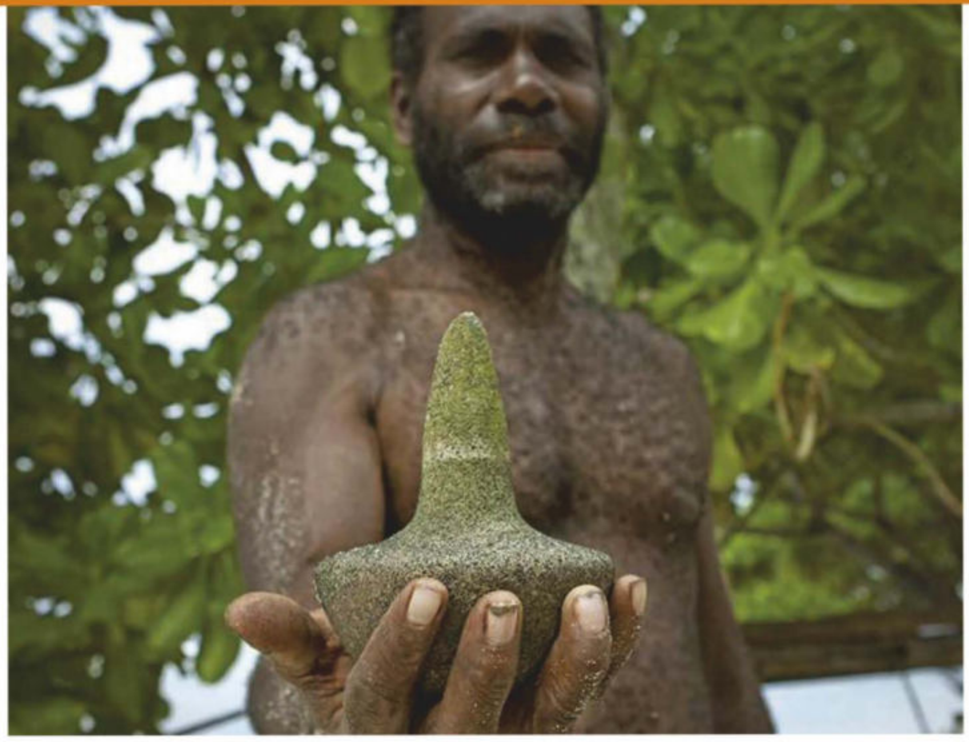
How do you reconstruct the magical belief systems of cultures that lived before written records?
Archaeology prior to written records is often a balance between the evidence and what we think it might tell us. When studying the deep past, you inevitably have to engage in some degree of imaginative reconstruction.

One of the earliest examples I've studied is a little carved figurine found in Germany. This thing is about 40,000 years old, and although it is a broadly human figure, it's got the head of a lion. It's certainly not an object with a practical purpose – you didn't bash sabre tooth tigers on the head with it or anything. So I'm pretty sure that you could discuss this thing in terms of magical properties.

And this is where the imaginative reconstruction comes in. It's made out of a mammoth tusk, so it combines three different things – human, lion and mammoth. Maybe some of the powers of those three animals were seen to be combined in some way. And its genitalia are detachable, so it could have appeared male at some points and female at others – maybe it was about playing with gender as well. So it's a figure with quite complex meanings.

Can you tell us about some of the other magical objects that you encountered?
For many years I worked as a curator in the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, and there's loads of magical stuff in there. One of my favourites is an onion – one of four that fell out of a pub chimney in Somerset, when a bunch of people were drinking there in 1872. These onions each had pieces of paper pinned to them with names on. It turns out that those were the names of temperance campaigners who were trying to get the pub closed down. The landlord of the pub had a bit of a reputation as a wizard. It seems that he was in some sort of battle with the temperance campaigners. But instead of taking them to court, he fought them by sticking onions up his chimney. We're guessing he hoped that, as the onions dried out, the people whose names were attached to them would also come to some sort of harm, maybe shrivel up or become less powerful.

> “The death of magic has been constantly exaggerated. In surveys, up to three-quarters of people in Britain and the US still admit to believing in some form of magic”



Modern magic A stone believed to have magical properties, including the ability to summon rain, from Laraibina village in New Ireland, Papua New Guinea

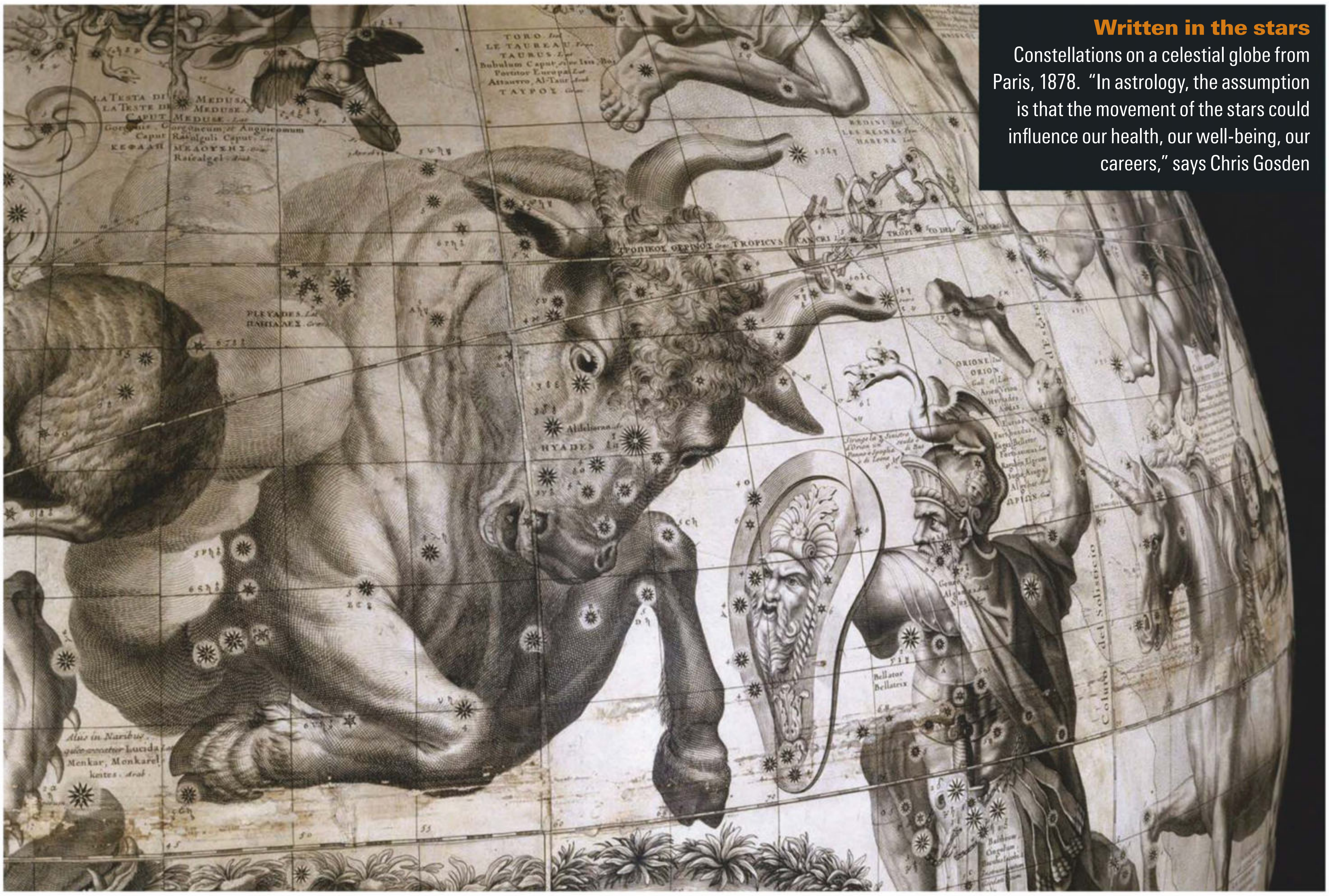
GETTY IMAGES

What I love about this onion is how the magical transformation of something so ordinary can reveal a slice of village politics – of middle-class reformers trying to shut down a working-class establishment. Magic has been described as a weapon of the weak, and I think that you can see that here. Sticking onions up chimneys isn't something you would bother to do if you feel powerful, but if you believe that it's your only recourse, then it might offer some hope – it could help your pub stay open, and keep you in a living.

You also write about how magic has been used as a weapon for the powerless in colonial settings. How so?
Resisting imperialism was incredibly hard, because the colonialists generally had better weapons and were followed by waves of disease. So people experimented with other means of fighting back. When the Dutch invaded Sumatra (in present-day Indonesia) in 1903, locals created protective magic to prevent Dutch bullets piercing their skin. They believed in the power of this sincerely. Those spells could be seen as part of a broader type of magic from that area of the world, known as *ilmu kebal*, which confers invulnerability on a person, meaning they could walk on fire or dance on swords. But in this case, that magic was repurposed in order to fight against colonisation.

You reconstruct the experience of shamanism on the Eurasian Steppe – what can you tell us about the role of the shaman?
People have invoked the figure of the shaman across many times and places, but the term comes from Siberian languages and refers to a figure who is able to deal more or less safely with the spirit world. Indigenous Siberian people believe that if something goes wrong – your reindeer start dying, for example – it's because something has gone wrong in the spirit world. The shaman is the one member of the community who has the ability and strength to enter the spirit world in order to negotiate – or battle – with the spirits. In this case, to stop them making the reindeer sick. The shaman can also transform themselves into an animal spirit and journey into other realms of reality. But like any area of life, they're not always successful, and they don't always return from the spirit world.

In belief systems like this, the distinction between humans, plants, animals or rocks is often blurred. For many North American cultures,



Written in the stars

Constellations on a celestial globe from Paris, 1878. "In astrology, the assumption is that the movement of the stars could influence our health, our well-being, our careers," says Chris Gosden

the whole universe is seen in some way as human, so you negotiate with those elements as you would with a human being. Sometimes that can be quite dangerous – it's not easy to negotiate with a bear. But perhaps if you're a shaman and you can enter the body of a bear, then you could engage with the bear spirit in a bear-like way. Of course, this is a very different view of the universe to ours, where we draw clear lines between animate and inanimate, human and non-human.

Another group that has a closely integrated relationship with nature is Aboriginal Australians. How does magic feature in their culture?

For Aboriginal people, they don't live *on* the land. They *are* the land and the land is them. So their culture isn't so much about the land as it *comes* from the land. Aboriginal people have a notion of a past in which the land was formed by ancestral spirits, moving across the land, forming water holes, rocks, outcrops, hills and valleys.

One aspect of this relationship that is quite hard for Europeans to grasp (and nobody's quite sure how far we have indeed grasped it) is the concept of songlines. These are lines stretching for thousands of kilometres across Australia where people can evoke the landscape. In Aboriginal culture, songs come from the land. And, by singing, you're evoking the land, not just in its physical sense, but more importantly, in its spiritual sense. The rhythm of the song evokes or reproduces the structure and topography of the landscape. People can sing about parts of Australia that they've never been to, but they can still understand through song, dance and mythology. It's a totally different conception of the world.

Is magic a thing of the past?

Far from it. The death of magic has been constantly exaggerated. In surveys, up to three-quarters of people in places like the US and Britain still admit to believing in some form of magic – whether ghosts, possession or psychic healing. Recently, I think we've become slightly less enamoured of rationalism as the only way to think about the world. As more concerns have been raised about what western approaches are doing to the planet, more people have started to explore a whole range of different approaches, like Wicca or Druidism.

And magic is still part of the toolkit for everyday life in many non-western societies. In Papua New Guinea today, people have forms of sorcery for getting their kids into university, which they use alongside filling in the application forms. One of the great things about magic is that it is constantly being reinvented. It's not some sort of past substrate of a bygone belief – people are developing new forms of magic all the time.

What can looking at magical beliefs tell us about different societies across global history?

Magic is global and all-pervasive, so if you miss it out of the story of human history, you lose a really important strand of what it has meant to be human. We've written lots of religious histories and histories of science and rational thought, but by and large, our histories of magic are very partial or lacking. If we accept that magical beliefs are a dimension of what it means to be human, we have to include them in global history.

I also think that we need to be more positive in how we approach magic. Broadly speaking, it's not irrational or primitive, it's not something that should be consigned to the past. It's part of human inventiveness. A crucial question that all humans face is: how does the universe work and how do I position myself within that universe? Magic is one of the ways in which people have puzzled their way through the world. H

MORE FROM US

Listen to an extended version of this interview with Chris Gosden on our podcast soon at **historyextra.com/podcast**

GETTY IMAGES

WATCH

Family values

At more than 1,300 pages, Vikram Seth's 1993 novel *A Suitable Boy*, a sprawling saga that involves the interlinked fates of four large Indian families, may not seem the most obvious candidate for adaptation as a six-part TV drama. But that's to reckon without Andrew Davies, who previously condensed down Tolstoy's *War and Peace* for the BBC, and director Mira Nair (*Monsoon Wedding*).

The story they tell together is set in the north of the country in the early 1950s, as India is about to go to the polls in its first democratic general election. These are heady times for university student Lata (Tanya Maniktala), coming of age at the same time as a new nation coalesces after the colonial era and partition.

Lata's mother is determined to find a husband – the 'suitable boy' of the title – for her daughter. But Lata herself is torn between a sense of duty, and her own yearning for romance and self-discovery.

Deepening the recurring theme of the conflict between tradition and modernity, another story strand focuses on Maan (Ishaan Khatter), a relative of Lata's by marriage. A privileged young man determined to enjoy himself, he is infatuated with a beautiful courtesan, Saeeda Bai (played by Bollywood legend Tabu), to the potential embarrassment of his politician father.

A Suitable Boy
BBC One / Due to air this summer

BBC

ENCOUNTERS

82 DIARY: LISTEN / WATCH / TASTE
By **Jonathan Wright**, **Matt Elton** and **Sam Nott**
87 RECOMMENDED History documentaries

Young love
Ishaan Khatter and Tabu star in Andrew Davies' new six-part adaptation of *A Suitable Boy,* Vikram Seth's family saga set in post-partition India

WATCH

Rumble in the jungle

To read some of the advance publicity for Spike Lee's latest film, which follows four African-American veterans on a journey to Vietnam, you could be forgiven for expecting a gentle drama about ageing men reflecting on their shared personal histories. But *Da 5 Bloods* only follows this familiar Hollywood template in its initial scenes set in Ho Chi Minh City, as if to lull viewers into a false sense of security.

What follows, as Paul (Delroy Lindo), Otis (Clarke Peters), Melvin (Isiah Whitlock Jr) and Eddie (Norm Lewis) trek into the Vietnam jungle in search of the remains of their fallen squadron leader and mentor Norman (Chadwick Boseman), is instead visceral and violent. This is a film that playfully riffs off *The Dirty Dozen*, *Apocalypse Now* and – because Norman's remains lie adjacent to a hidden cache of gold bullion – *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*.

It's all hugely entertaining, if a little dizzying. Lee, for example, employs a technique popularised by German playwright Bertolt Brecht of not bothering to de-age his cast in flashback scenes. It's also a savagely satirical film, and its underlying message – that African-Americans laid down their lives for a United States that even today is blighted by deep-seated racism – couldn't be clearer.

Da 5 Bloods
Netflix / Streaming now

Confined: Hidden Children tells the stories of more than 80 Jews who were hidden from the Nazis by Catholic nun Sister Denise Bergon

LISTEN

Survival against the odds

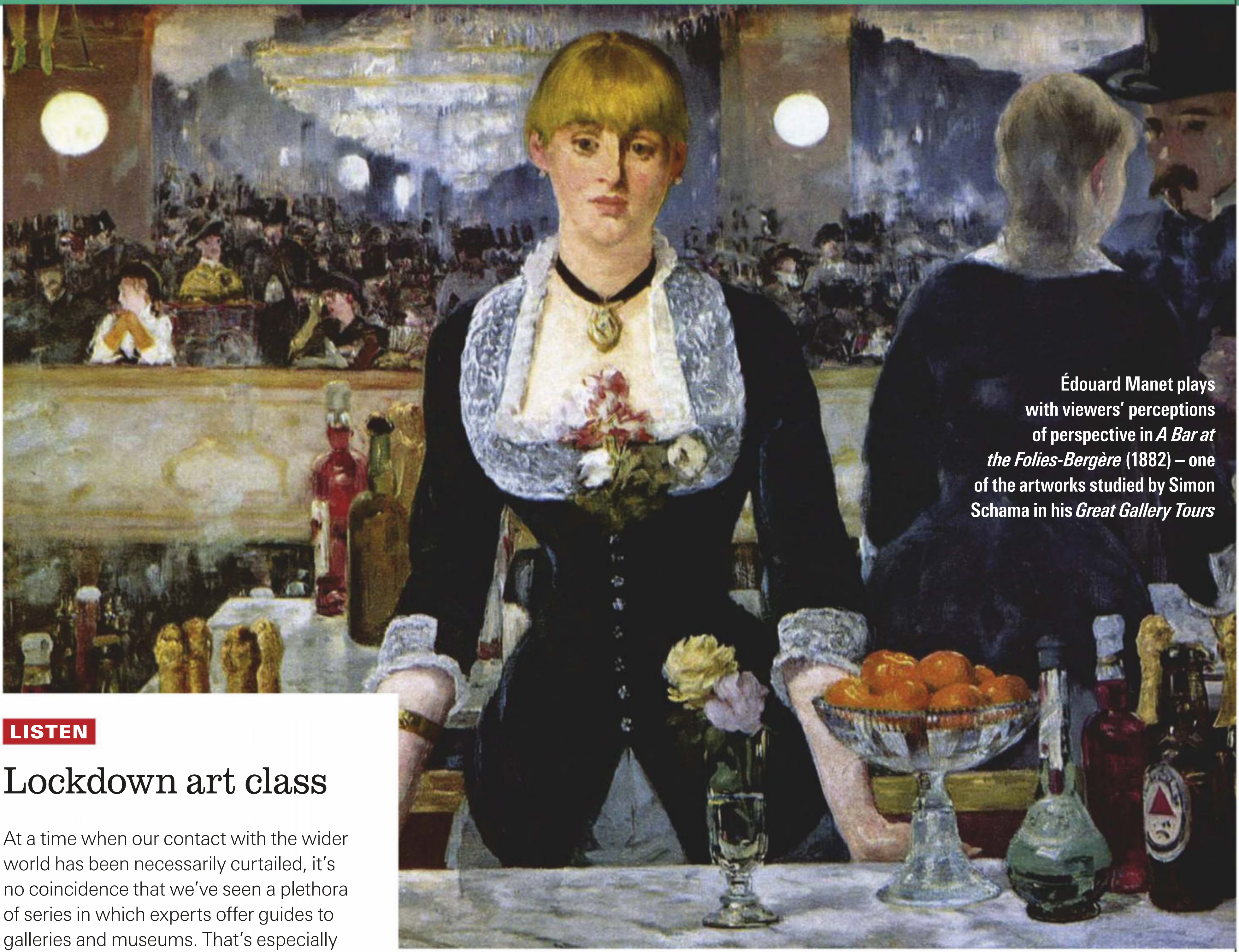
Those sheltering Jewish people in Nazi-occupied France faced being sent to concentration camps themselves – but a few brave souls accepted the dangers. They included Catholic nun Sister Denise Bergon, who hid Jewish children in a boarding school in the commune of Capdenac between 1942 and 1944.

In a moving radio documentary, three of more than 80 people who owed their wartime survival to Sister Denise – sisters Annie Beck and Helene Ulrich, and Albert Seifer – tell Alice Doyard about their experiences. It's a story made all the more remarkable because Capdenac was strategically important to the Nazis due to its railway junction near to a notoriously murderous SS division.

Confined: Hidden Children
BBC World Service /
Due to air Tuesday 21 July

Spike Lee's new film, *Da 5 Bloods*, follows the exploits of a group of Vietnam War veterans

ALICE DOYARD/NETFLIX



Édouard Manet plays with viewers' perceptions of perspective in *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882) – one of the artworks studied by Simon Schama in his *Great Gallery Tours*

GETTY IMAGES

LISTEN

Lockdown art class

At a time when our contact with the wider world has been necessarily curtailed, it's no coincidence that we've seen a plethora of series in which experts offer guides to galleries and museums. That's especially welcome when the expert in question is art historian Simon Schama, whose new series finds him virtually prising open the doors of four galleries to which he often returns: London's Courtauld, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, Madrid's Prado Museum and the Whitney in New York.

Operating perhaps on the oft-repeated principle that the pictures are always better on the radio, Schama hones in on works that hold a special significance for him. At the Courtauld, for instance, he offers a close study of Édouard Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882) – a painting showing a bartender in front of a mirror that plays with our ideas of perspective. In the Rijksmuseum, Schama's focus is on Rembrandt, whose works at the gallery range from grand canvasses to intimate scenes. At the Prado, listeners are invited to contemplate the works of Velázquez and Goya. In New York, Schama contemplates Edward Hopper's haunting *A Woman in the Sun*, in which a naked woman stands in a sparsely furnished room illuminated by a shaft of light from a window.

Schama also hears the reflections of the galleries' directors and curators.

Simon Schama: The Great Gallery Tours

BBC Radio 4 / Due to air Monday 13 July

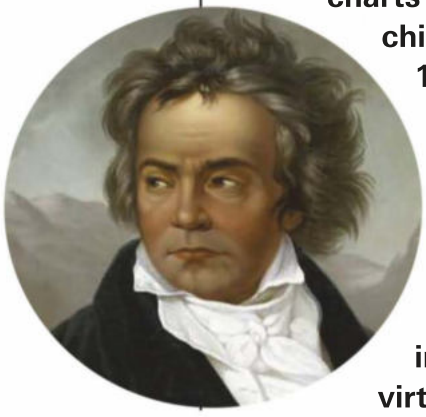
GETTY IMAGES

WATCH

A troubled life

We usually approach Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827, seen below in a 19th-century portrait) through his extraordinary music. But that's not the approach of a new BBC Four series, part of the corporation's *Beethoven Unleashed* season to celebrate the 250th anniversary of his birth. Instead, Beethoven's often difficult life takes centre stage.

The first of three episodes charts Beethoven's childhood in 18th-century Bonn, when his demanding, occasionally violent father pushed his son to success, initially as a piano virtuoso. The second programme contrasts the creativity that gave the world the *Eroica* symphony with a life beset by health issues, notably Beethoven's growing deafness, and a need for love and companionship. The final instalment deals with Beethoven's final years, which included a bitter custody battle over his nephew.



Throughout the series, musicians and experts offer their perspectives.

Being Beethoven

BBC Four / Due to air in July

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Visit *historyextra.com* for weekly updates on upcoming TV and radio programmes

HISTORY COOKBOOK

A delicious spiced jelly, popular in Tudor times

TASTE

Claret jelly

This sweet, flavoursome jelly, made from a warm spiced wine, was reportedly among the dishes served at the court of Henry VIII. Regardless of its provenance, it's certainly fit for a king – indulgent and aromatic.

Difficulty: 2/10
Time: Half an hour to prepare and one hour to set

INGREDIENTS

300ml claret or red wine
100g sugar
Two pieces of root ginger
One 5cm stick of cinnamon
¼ nutmeg, crushed or roughly chopped
Up to six cloves (to taste)
¼ tsp coriander seeds
A pinch of salt
Five leaves of gelatin

METHOD

Lightly bruise the spices, and gently simmer with the salt in 300ml of water for 10 minutes. Pour the claret or red wine into a separate pan, stir in the gelatin and leave to soak for 10 minutes. Strain the spiced water through a fine cloth or coffee filter into the pan, stir in the sugar and gelatin mixture, and gently heat while stirring until fully dissolved. Pour into a dish and leave in the fridge until fully set.

Recipe from Brigitte Webster–thetudortravelguide.com/Cooking and Dining in Tudor and Early Stuart England by Peter Brears (Prospect Books)

SEARCH

Opening the BBC's archives

If you've ever wondered whether the BBC has covered a particular aspect of history, help is at hand with the launch of the corporation's new online Programme Explorer. It allows you to search more than 200,000 programmes from across BBC TV and radio, as well as episodes from the BBC Sounds podcast service.

It's a work in progress, so there are caveats – it's not comprehensive, and skewed towards both radio and more recent fare – but it's still a valuable way to tap into a huge catalogue of top-class material, much of which is available to watch or listen to via BBC Sounds and iPlayer. A search for 'Aztecs', for instance, yields episodes of both Neil MacGregor's classic radio series *A History of the World in 100 Objects* and the more recent, Greg Jenner-fronted, *You're Dead to Me*.

Part of the BBC's Genome archiving project, the tool has been developed in response to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. It's part of a wider initiative to make more of the BBC archive publicly available in the lead-up to its centenary in 2022.

BBC Genome Programme Explorer
genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/explorer

Claire Foy stars as Anne Boleyn in the TV adaptation of *Wolf Hall*. A new service enables you to search for more than 200,000 BBC programmes online

WATCH

The power of print

In 1969, Rupert Murdoch entered the British newspaper market when he acquired the *News of the World*. A year later he bought *The Sun*. These purchases ushered in an era in which the popular press exerted an extraordinary influence on British life – so much so that Tony Blair, then leader of the Labour opposition and prime minister in waiting, flew to Australia in 1995 to speak at one of Murdoch's News Corporation conferences.

But as a new three-part series focusing in detail on the years 1997–2012 relates, Murdoch's tabloid papers became mired in the scandals highlighted by the 2011–12 Leveson Inquiry, notably the revelations over phone hacking. Archive material and interviews with key players in the wider story mean that this documentary is detailed and absorbing.

The Rise of the Murdoch Dynasty
BBC Two / Due to air in July

Rupert Murdoch pictured with a copy of the *News of the World*. A new series explores his media empire

SAMANTHA NOTT/GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

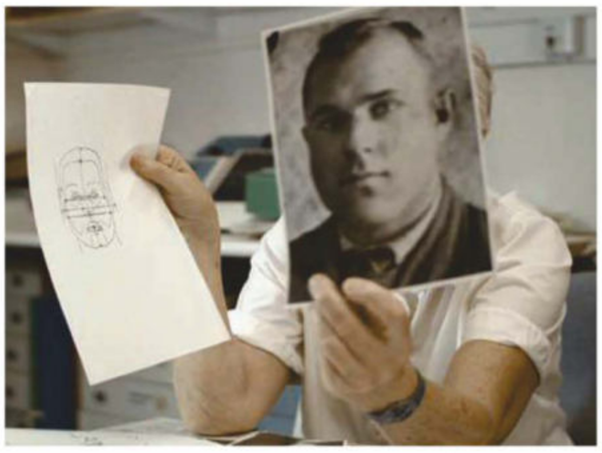
Documentaries to watch at home

Our series exploring the best historical entertainment to enjoy, without leaving the house, continues with some of our favourite factual TV programmes. All are available to stream now via online providers

Churchill's Secret Agents: The New Recruits

Netflix

Shown first on the BBC in 2018 and now available via streaming service Netflix, this immersive history series sees 14 modern 'time-travellers' apply to 1940s spy school. Those selected will undergo intensive training, from lock-picking to working with explosives, to prove that they have what it takes to be an undercover agent in occupied Second World War Europe. Britain's Special Operations Executive (SOE) trained thousands of everyday men and women to go behind enemy lines and risk their lives, and some of their real missions and personalities are featured in this entertaining five-part documentary.
Susanne Frank *Art editor*



The Devil Next Door traces attempts to prosecute an ageing mechanic living in the US for war crimes

The Devil Next Door

Netflix

John Demjanjuk, a mechanic living in Ohio, caused an international sensation in 1986 when he was deported to Israel to stand trial, accused of having been the notorious Treblinka camp guard Ivan the Terrible. The story of what happened next is full of unexpected twists – especially if you don't already know Demjanjuk's eventual fate. As the series progresses, questions are thrown up around the nature of culpability and the quest to bring perpetrators of the Holocaust to justice, even as they enter extreme old age.
Rob Attar *Editor*

NETFLIX/BBC

Michael Wood's Story of England

BBC iPlayer

The Leicestershire village of Kibworth stands as a microcosm of the entire nation's story in this epic six-part series from 2010. Studying archival records, family trees and even digs in local gardens, Michael Wood embarks on an enormous research project with the help of the local community. From evidence of a Roman villa up to life in the present day, it's a fascinating look at how everyday village folk experienced centuries of sweeping social change.
Rachel Dickens *Senior deputy art editor*

Britain's Forgotten Slave Owners

BBC iPlayer

As calls grow to recognise the darker side of our nation's history, this documentary feels even more pressing than when it first aired in 2015. Fronted by David Olusoga, it reveals the work of the Slave Compensation Commission, which paid out a staggering £20m in compensation on Britain's abolition of slavery. This money did not go to the formerly enslaved, however, but to the slave-owners, and was subsequently funnelled back into Britain's economy. Essential viewing for those who want to understand why debates about race and historical memory still rage today.
Ellie Cawthorne *Section editor*

David Olusoga presents the ever-relevant *Britain's Forgotten Slave Owners*

Miss World 1970: Beauty Queens and Bedlam

BBC iPlayer

The 1970 Miss World contest was a moment at which worlds collided. This documentary shares the stories of the beauty queens, women's libbers, anti-apartheid campaigners and celebrities who descended on the Royal Albert Hall, with explosive results. The archive footage – from high-heeled swimwear parades to Bob Hope's tirade of sexist jokes – is by turns hilarious and horrifying, while interviews with those involved capture the way in which the event became a lightning rod for debates on gender and race. **EC**

Bob Hope crowns Jennifer Hosten winner of the "hilarious and horrifying" 1970 Miss World Pageant

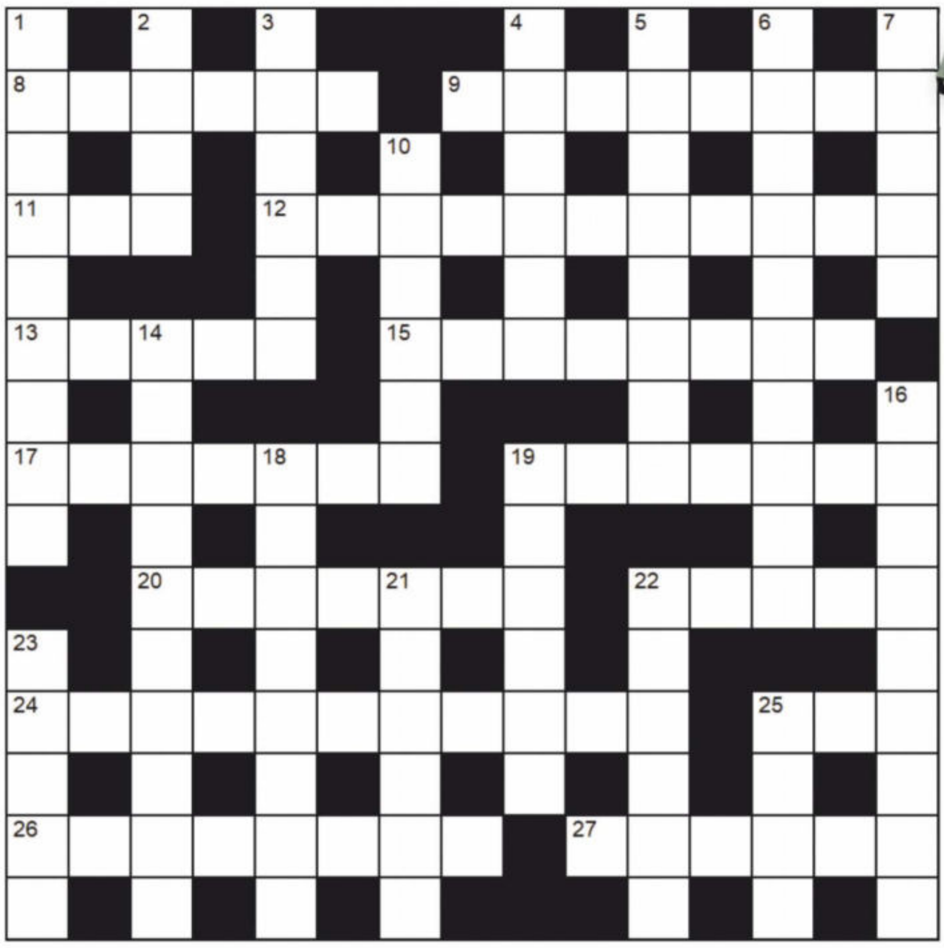
The World at War

UKTV Play

Was it the haunting theme music, Laurence Olivier's stark narration, or the unflinching firsthand testimonies? Whatever the reason, *The World at War* remains, for me, the apogee of historical documentary series. The most expensive factual series ever made when it was released in 1973, its 26 episodes offered an expansive rendition of one of the most turbulent episodes in human history. It was recently described as "unforgettable and irreplaceable"; more than 30 years after I first watched it, I find it hard to disagree.
Spencer Mizen *Production editor*

PRIZE CROSSWORD

Book worth £30 for **4** winners



Across

8 Erasmus ____, 18th-century British physician and botanist, grandfather to a celebrated naturalist (6)

9 Nineteenth and 20th-century Dutch exotic dancer whose name became a synonym for a seductive female spy (4,4)

11/6 down A nickname of William IV, acknowledging his naval career (3,6,4)

12 Illuminated gospel texts in Latin, dating from AD 800, which are now a major tourist attraction in Dublin (4,2,5)

13 See 25 across

15 Pacific island whose inhabitants descend from the mutineers from the *Bounty* and the Tahitians who accompanied them (8)

17 Regnal title of the 17th-century Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (7)

19 First name of the 15th and 16th-century Italian navigator who explored the New World on behalf of Spain and later Portugal (7)

20 The sudden collapse of this airline in 2017 was the largest in UK aviation history up to that point (7)

22 Battle of 16 June 1815, in which Napoleon defeated Prussian troops under Blucher's command (5)

24 Name, first used by Linnaeus in 1758 to identify our species (4,7)

25/13 Former actor who, revered by the working classes, rose to political prominence during her husband's presidency (3,5)

26 ____ Andrewes (1555–1626), theologian and defender of Anglican doctrines (8)

27 Historical term, deriving from the Italian/French for the countries of the eastern Mediterranean shores (6)

Down

1 French cabaret singer, nicknamed 'Little Sparrow', who achieved international fame (5,4)

2 One of the major Algonquian-speaking native peoples of Canada (4)

3 English historian, Edward, whose most famous work is *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (6)

4 Indian term for a member of a criminal gang, such as was led by the 'Bandit Queen', Phoolan Devi (6)

5 Leader of a major Kentish rebellion (1450) against corruption and abuse of power within Henry VI's government (4,4)

6 See 11 across

7 Former name of an Adriatic island, location of naval battles of 1811 (British versus French) and 1866 (Austrians versus Italians) (5)

10 Surname, derived from Middle English, that means a maker of barrels (6)

14 A practice carried out by interwar Germany in violation of the Treaty of Versailles, and intensified under the Nazi regime (10)

16 Its members formed 'conservative' associations, following Britain's Reform Act of 1832, extending electoral rights to the middle class (4,5)

18 eg Bugs Moran (8)

19 Last name of a highly successful 20th-century designer of English Romantic style furnishing and clothing fabrics (6)

21 Humphry ____, 18th/19th-century English landscape designer, regarded as the successor to Capability Brown (6)

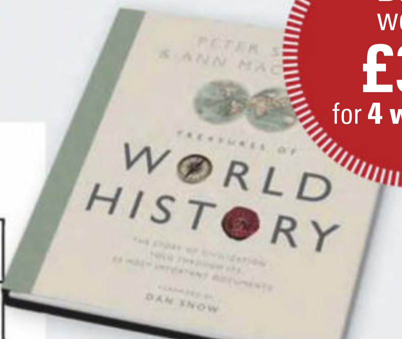
22 19th-century British surgeon, pioneer of antiseptic and preventative medicine (6)

23 Prehistoric people from the Arctic coast of Alaska, who preceded the Inuits (5)

25 'Plague village' in the Derbyshire Dales that, in 1666, cut itself off to prevent the spread of the disease (4)

Who is this French singer? (see 1 down)

Compiled by
Eddie James



Treasures of World History

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Solution to our June 2020 crossword

Across 8 Air drop 9 Lollard 11 Roman 12 Unionists 13/22 Tokugawa Ieyasu 15 Salome 17 Henrietta 23 Florence 25 Hermitage 26 Leeds 27 Scrolls 28 Luddite

Down 1 Barrett 2 Gromyko 3/26 Iron Lady 4 Opium Wars 5 Elgin 6 Dan Snow 7 Odyssey 10 Lancaster 14 Glenshiel 16 Nellie Bly 18 Sikhism 19 Nyerere 20 Angevin 21 Pevsner 24 Farsi

Eight winners of *Victory in Europe*

J Watson, Merseyside; C J Deacy, Greater Manchester; T Carroll, Nottinghamshire; N Grogan, Purley; J Olin, Cheshire; K Colecliffe, Denbighshire; A Hayes, West Midlands; B Smith, West Midlands

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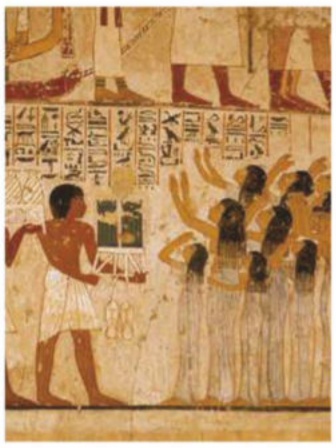

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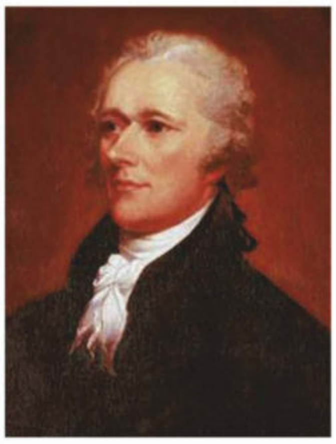

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The long-awaited 'Hamilfilm', a recording of the popular musical, will soon arrive on Disney+. But how much do you know about the man who rose from an impoverished upbringing to become one of the founding fathers of the United States?

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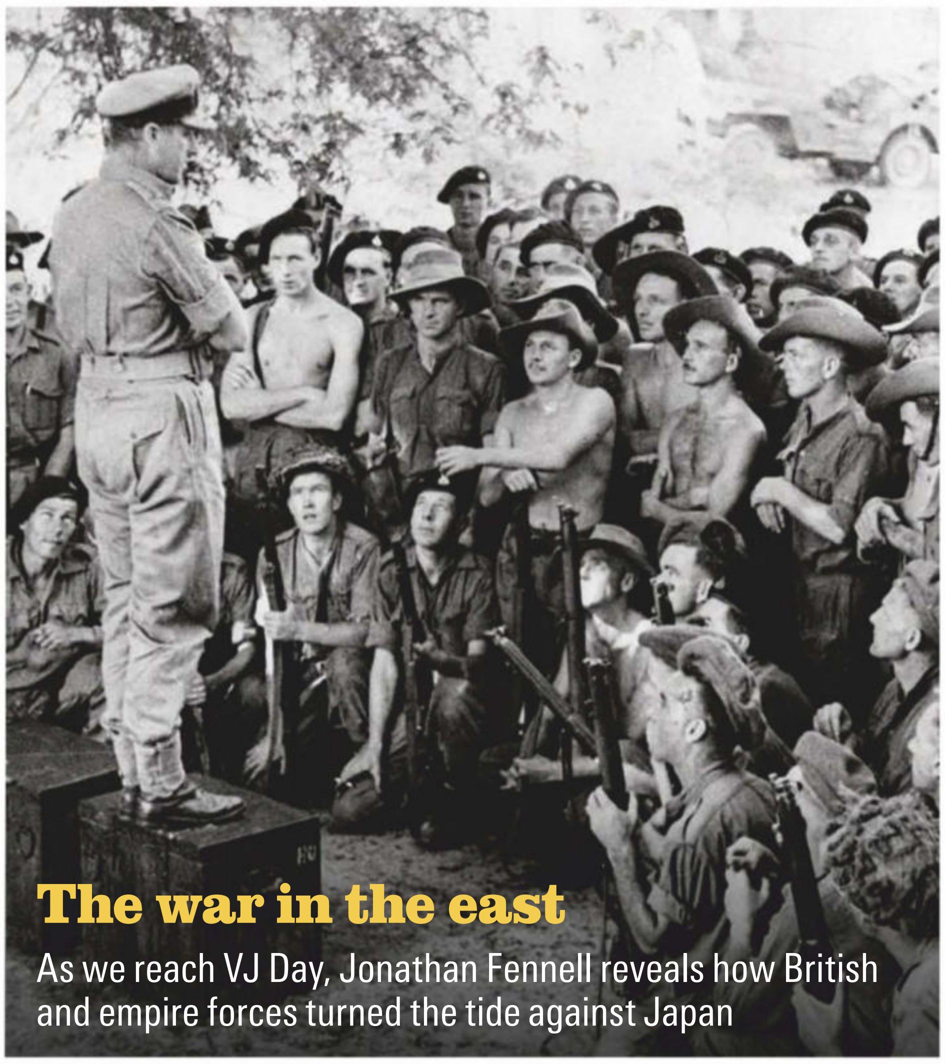

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As we reach VJ Day, Jonathan Fennell reveals how British and empire forces turned the tide against Japan

Edward the Confessor

Tom Licence presents a new picture of the 11th-century monarch

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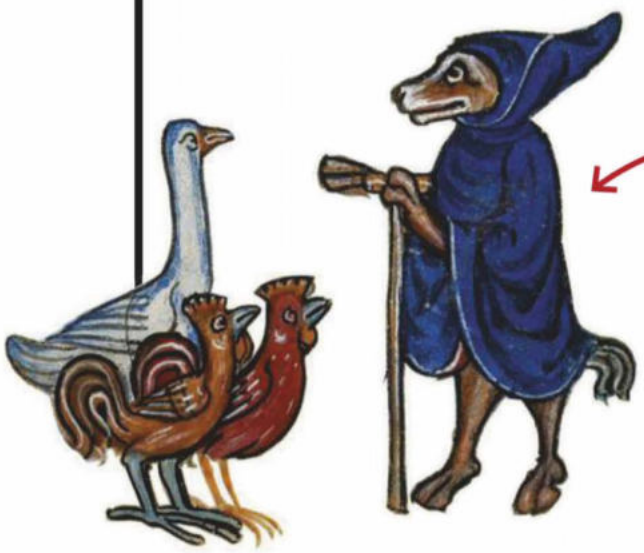
Afua Hirsch explores how the continent's culture reflects its history



Life on the margins

Johanna Green examines some of the curious images on medieval manuscripts

***Miriam Stoppard**, doctor, author and agony aunt, chooses*

Grace Darling

1815–42

Miriam Stoppard is a doctor, author, TV presenter and agony aunt. She was awarded an OBE in 2010 for her services to healthcare and charity
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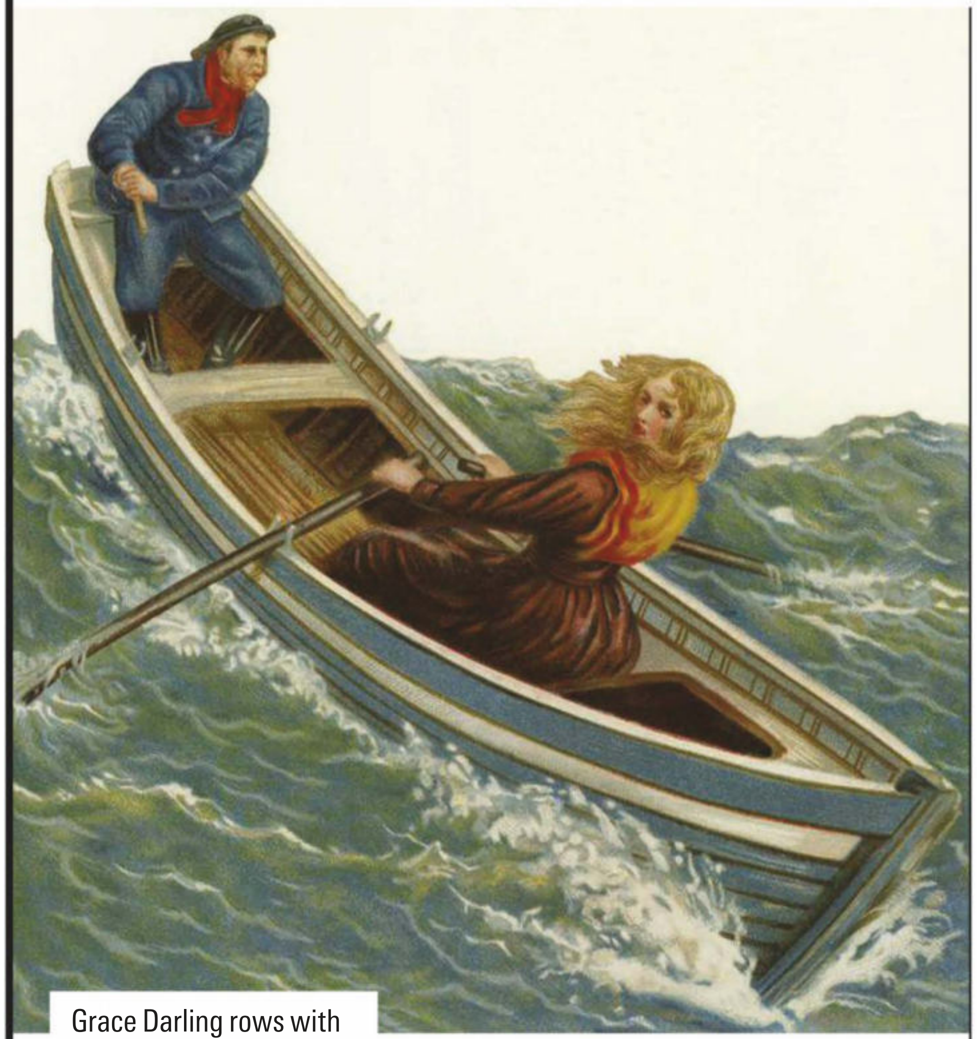

Grace Darling rows with her father to aid the crew of a stricken ship. Her actions, early on 7 September 1838, helped save nine people

IN PROFILE

Grace Darling was born in 1815 in the Northumberland village of Bamburgh. Her father worked as a lighthouse-keeper on the nearby Farne Islands; it was from an upstairs window of Longstone Lighthouse that Grace saw a shipwrecked boat in the early hours of 7 September 1838. Her bravery in rescuing survivors won her national fame, including being immortalised in an 1843 poem by William Wordsworth.

When did you first hear about Grace Darling?

During the Second World War, I was evacuated from Newcastle, which was being bombed, to the village of Bamburgh on the Northumberland coast. I went to school there, and everyone knew about Grace because she was the local heroine. So I've known about her since the age of five.

What kind of woman was Darling?

I identified with Grace from the minute I learnt about her, and she was a real inspiration to me. She was a non-conformist who flouted convention, and she did a man's work, helping her lighthouse-keeper father William at Longstone Lighthouse. It's still flashing away on the North Sea coast to this day.

What made Darling a hero?

The night in September 1838 that a ship, the *Forfarshire*, got wrecked on a nearby rocky island. She rode out in a longboat with her father from the lighthouse to the scene of the wreck, despite the high winds and waves. Together, they rescued nine people. Grace's story had a huge effect on me: it made me see women as strong, assertive and determined. And it made me think: if Grace could do it, I can do it!

What was her finest hour?

Undoubtedly, it's the heroism that Grace displayed following the shipwreck. She pleaded with her father to go to the rescue, despite his initial refusal because of the almost gale-force winds. They had to row 1,700 yards, and William got the survivors off the rocks while she held the boat steady. I've seen the boat – it's at the Grace Darling Museum in Bamburgh. There was none of this 'I'm not sure I can do it, I'm only a weak woman' stuff. She just rose to the challenge. Grace went on to find fame and was immortalised in painting and poem but, sadly, contracted tuberculosis just a few years later. She died in 1842 at the age of just 26.

> "Grace pleaded with her father to go to the rescue, despite his initial refusal because of the almost gale-force winds"

Can you see any parallels between Darling's life and your own?

Yes – I see us both as Bamburgh girls. I've got a bolthole in the village, and whenever I go I make a point of visiting the plaque on the house in which she lived, and her memorial in the local churchyard. It's a kind of pilgrimage.

Does Darling have any special relevance today?

If Grace lived today she would be an NHS frontline worker, whether it was her job or not. If she was prepared to risk her life rowing through a storm, she would have volunteered without hesitation to help in the fight against coronavirus. H

Miriam Stoppard was talking to York Membery

LISTEN

In Radio 4's **Great Lives**, guests choose inspirational figures: *bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qxsb*

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Thank you...

To Rachel for the delicious cooked breakfasts you delivered to my apartment piping hot every morning during isolation. What a treat!

[From homeowner Joan, Windsor House]

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